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TREATISE

ON

THE SABBATH;

OR,

ILLUSTRATIONS

OF

THE ORIGIN,

OBLIGATION, CHANGE, PROPER OBSERVANCE,

AND SPIRITUAL ADVANTAGES

OF

THAT HOLY DAY.

BY THE REV. JOHN GLEN,

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TO THE

MANAGERS AND CONGREGATION

OF

Portobello Chapel,

THE FOLLOWING TREATISE,

THE SUBSTANCE OF WHICH WAS DELIVERED TO

THEM FROM THE PULPIT,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE PASTOR,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE subject of the following Treatise is one of vast importance to the temporal, and especially to the spiritual interests of the human race. To insist upon it, therefore, cannot at any time be unseasonable, and far less so at a period when the obligation and sanctity of the Sabbath are by many not at all recognised, and by a still greater number wantonly and habitually violated. In the former case, the principles which are held do not arise from a dispassionate and enlightened investigation of the question, but from a mistaken notion, entered into without the trouble of fair inquiry, that this institution was peculiar to the Jews, and consequently abolished at the death

of Christ. And though, in the latter case, it may not be denied that the season of sacred rest is binding upon Christians; yet an impatience of religious restraint, and a predominant attachment to the gains, the pleasures, and the frivolities of the world, lead to a practical disregard of the authority and sanction by which it is appointed and enforced.

To meet both of these cases is the object of the work which I now lay before the public. Accordingly, I have endeavoured, in the first chapter, to prove that the Sabbath was instituted at the close of creation. From this consideration, and several others suggested by the language of Scripture, I have aimed at evincing, in the second chapter, that it is the bounden duty of all, to the end of time, to consecrate one whole day in seven to the immediate and exclusive service of God. And having shewn that the morality of the Sabbath does not consist in its immutability, as to the precise day on which it was originally observed, I have stated, in the third chapter, the reasons and the evidence for

its change from the last to the first day of the week. This change has often been a source of perplexity to many honestly inquiring and seriously professing christians; and if the remarks here advanced shall in any competent degree remove their difficulties, it will afford me the sincerest satisfaction.

The moral and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath being, I trust, sufficiently established, I have next adverted to the manner in which it ought to be observed; and to the general discussion of this topic I have devoted the fourth chapter. But as it is one thing to know our duties, and another thing to perform them, I have considered, in the fifth and last chapter, the unspeakable advantages which result from the proper observance of that holy institution.

It becomes not me to say how the plan, thus proposed, has been accomplished. The work may contain many faults; but, such as it is, I commit it to the candour of the public,—cherishing the hope that it may be as useful as I am sure it was well intended. If, through the bless-

ing of God, it shall be the means of impressing upon the minds of any who may now entertain doubts, a sense of the divine appointment and authority of the Lord's day, and of directing all to the right performance of the religious services which it implies, my object and my anxious wishes will be completely attained.

PORTOBELLO, *February* 18, 1822.

CONTENTS.

Page

INTRODUCTION, ... 1

CHAP. I.

On the Original Institution of the Sabbath, ... 4

SECT. I.

Its Institution at the close of Creation argued from the words of Moses, Gen. ii. 3. 5

SECT. II.

Its Institution at the close of Creation, argued from a few remote allusions to it in Sacred and Profane History, ... 13

SECT. III.

Its Institution at the close of Creation, argued from the eminent piety for which the Patriarchs were distinguished, ... 20

SECT. IV.

Its Institution at the close of Creation, argued from the manner in which its approach was intimated at the giving of Manna in the desert, and in which the mention of it was afterwards introduced in the Fourth Commandment, ... 24

SECT. V.

Its Institution at the close of Creation, argued from the language of the Apostle to the Hebrews, Chap. iv. 3, 4. 34

CHAP. II.

On the Moral and Perpetual Obligation of the Sabbath, ... 38

SECT. I.

Its Moral and Perpetual Obligation, argued from its appointment at the close of Creation, ... 41

Page

SECT. II.

Its Moral and Perpetual Obligation, argued from the manner in which the Fourth Commandment was given; the situation which it holds in the Decalogue; and the duty which it imposed on the stranger in the Jewish state, ... 51

SECT. III.

Its Moral and Perpetual Obligation, argued from Old Testament Prophecies, concerning the Observance of it in New Testament times, ... 57

SECT. IV.

Its Moral and Perpetual Obligation, argued from the declarations of our Lord Jesus Christ, and from the language of the Apostle James, ... 62

CHAP. III.

On the Reasons and Evidence for the Change of the Sabbath from the Last to the First day of the week, ... 68

SECT. I.

Reasons for the Change of the Sabbath, ... 71

(1.) On the first day of the week our blessed Lord rose from the dead, and evinced the accomplishment of our redemption, ... 72

(2.) As the day which completed the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt was fixed on as their Sabbath, so the day which evinced our deliverance from worse than Egyptian bondage, should, on the same principle, be kept as a memorial of that event, ... 78

(3.) As every part of the instituted worship of God, under the New Testament economy, has a direct reference to Christ, so should also the day on which that worship is publicly performed, ... 80

Page

SECT. II.

The Evidence for the Change of the Sabbath,..... 82
(1.) The practice of the Apostles and first Christians,..... ib.
(2.) The declaration of the Apostle John in the isle of Patmos,..... 92
(3.) The testimony of ancient uninspired writers, 95

CHAP. IV.

On the manner in which the Sabbath ought to be observed,.....102

SECT. I.

The duty of preparation for the Sabbath,.....103

SECT. II.

The evils to be abstained from on the Sabbath,.....108
ART. 1. Every thing sinful in itself,.....ib.
2. All worldly business,.....111
3. All secular pleasures,.....117
4. All worldly thoughts,.....127

SECT. III.

The duties to be practised on the Sabbath,.....130
ART. 1. The public duties of the Sabbath,.....131
(1.) Attendance in the house of God for devotional purposes,.....132
(2.) Entering with spirit and life into the services which we are there called to perform,.....146
Prayer,.....147
Praise,.....149
Partaking of the Lord's Supper,.....153
Hearing the word,.....155
ART. 2. The domestic duties of the Sabbath,...158
(1.) A watchful inspection over the conduct of all committed to our charge,..160
(2.) The religious instruction of our children and servants,.....163
(3.) The worship of God in our families,..168

Page

ART. 3. The secret duties of the Sabbath,.....173
(1.) Devout meditation,.....ib.
(2.) Self-examination,.....178
(3.) The reading of the Scriptures and other religious books,.....182
(4.) Prayer,.....191

SECT. IV.

Works of piety, necessity, and mercy,.....197
(1.) Works of piety,.....198
(2.) Works of necessity,.....201
(3.) Works of mercy,.....210

CHAP. V.

On the advantages which result from keeping the Sabbath holy,.....214

SECT. I.

The refreshment of the body,.....215

SECT. II.

The prevention of irreligion and infidelity,.....218

SECT. III.

The promotion of our progress in holiness,.....226

SECT. IV.

The enjoyment of the divine favour,.....230

SECT. V.

The increase of our consolations in the pilgrimage of life,.....235

NOTES,.....239

ERRATA.

In page 41, first line, insert the article *a* between the words *in* and *private.*
—— 197, for Sect. III. read Sect. IV.
—— 214, for Chap. IV. read Chap. V.
—— 245, line six from bottom, for *Hames,* read *names.*

A TREATISE

ON

THE SABBATH.

INTRODUCTION.

THAT God ought to be worshipped is a truth founded on the relation in which we stand to him as our Creator, our Preserver, and our Redeemer. From this relation he has a just and unalienable claim to our gratitude and homage—a claim which we cannot resist without robbing him of his right, and incurring his displeasure. Nor does it become us, as individuals merely, but also as associated bodies, to render to him our adoration, and thanksgiving, and praise, for the numerous tokens of that kind and paternal beneficence which he bestows upon us in common. And this

is a duty which is farther recommended and enforced by the fact, that all our emotions, religious as well as natural, from the excitement and strength imparted to them by sympathy, operate most powerfully in the presence of our fellow-men.

But for the social worship of God, thus incumbent on us, some particular time, regularly returning, must be appropriated. For without such an appropriation, the ordinary occupations of life would incessantly interfere with the services of the sanctuary; so that, either our temporal interests would suffer by the jarring, or the jealousy and rivalship of commercial advantage would merge in worldly ambition every spiritual consideration, and withdraw our attention from the things which belong to our everlasting peace. It is equally requisite, that the season devoted to that sacred purpose should be appointed and made known by an authority which none, with impunity, can question or dispute. The government of each country, it is true, might issue mandates to compel obedience, in so far as going to church is concerned; but still there would be a radical and palpable defect in the institution itself, since religion is a matter which lies between the soul and God, and which no power on earth is able, suppose it should make the attempt, to regulate by the wisest enactments.

Hence the Almighty only, whose dominion is the universe, and whose decisions are binding on the conscience of every accountable creature, is entitled to determine the time, and the order of its return, for the public and stated celebration of his worship. Now, on this point he has unequivocally declared his will, inasmuch as the Scriptures explicitly inform us, that he demands every seventh day, after six allowed us for the management of our secular affairs, as a Sabbath or Rest, to be consecrated to his immediate service. This requirement opens up a wide field of important consideration; and, with a view to illustrate its nature, its objects, and its bearings, I propose to treat, *First*, Of the original institution of the Sabbath; *Secondly*, Of its moral and perpetual obligation; *Thirdly*, Of the reasons and evidence for its change from the last to the first day of the week; *Fourthly*, Of the manner in which it ought to be observed; and, *Lastly*, Of the advantages which result from keeping it holy.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE ORIGINAL INSTITUTION OF THE SABBATH.

THE term Sabbath, which is of Hebrew derivation, signifies *Rest* in general, but more especially that *sacred* rest which God has enjoined upon his people. By a metonymy it denotes also the *season* on which that rest is enjoyed, or the *seventh* day of the hebdomadal cycle, distinguished from all others, by its being separated from worldly employment and devoted to the performance of religious duties. These duties are many and important; such as our devout meditation on the perfections and character of Jehovah,—our acknowledgment of our entire and necessary dependence on him,—our expressions of gratitude for his unwearied care and protection,—our fervent supplications for his continued favour and blessing,—and our serious attention to the reading, and hearing, and learning of his holy will.

At what period this ordinance was originally instituted has long been the subject of polemical discussion. Writers of the most eminent talents and acquirements have ranged themselves on opposite sides of the question; some tracing its date to the close of creation, and others referring it to the falling of manna, or the promulgation of the law in the wilderness of Arabia. But that the former of these opinions embraces the true state of the matter will appear to any man of ordinary understanding, who begins and prosecutes the inquiry with an ingenuous and unprejudiced mind. And, in proof of this averment, various arguments may be adduced, all bearing with more or less clearness on the point at issue.

SECTION I.

The Institution of the Sabbath at the close of Creation argued from the words of Moses, in the second chapter of the Book of Genesis.

After detailing the Divine procedure during the six days employed in forming the universe, the inspired historian adds, in the second and third verses of that chapter, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he *had* made; and he rested on the seventh day from

all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." From the connexion of this passage with the preceding context, it is evident that Moses here speaks of what the great Architect did, as soon as he had accomplished his mighty achievements. The whole is plain historical narration, in which each clause succeeds another in strict grammatical order, without any break or interval, and without any qualifying adjunct to refer the institution of the Sabbath to a subsequent period.

It is obviously a forced, unnatural, and gratuitous position, to maintain that, because the Creator rested on the seventh day, after six days spent in arranging and finishing the wonders of his power, he two thousand five hundred years afterwards blessed and sanctified that day. At the *beginning* he blessed it, when he pronounced it a season of rejoicing to the human race, as connected with their spiritual advantage, and fitted for the excitement of many delightful recollections. And at the beginning he sanctified it, when he set it apart for his exclusive service, and ordered them to devote it, in all time coming, to the purposes of that consecration. Besides, if the Almighty thus blessed and sanctified the se-

venth day, from its being the day on which he rested, on consummating the works of his hands, the reason for all this was equally strong, at the close of creation, as at any future stage of the world's existence. We must either, therefore, suppose, what is altogether inconsistent with the Divine character, that the Father of mercies left his intelligent offspring ignorant of their duty, and the means of promoting their spiritual interests; or we must, in all fairness, conclude, that the seventh day, which was the first that smiled on the beauties of the finished system, was appropriated from the very commencement of time, as a season sacred to meditation, thanksgiving, and prayer.

To say that Moses here introduces the mention of God's blessing and sanctifying the seventh day, not in the order of time, but in the order of connexion, is to do violence to the plain and unequivocal statement of the inspired penman.* These actions are clearly represented as contemporaneous with his resting from his works; and to hold them merely as an anticipation of what was afterwards done, is to sport an opinion directly opposed to the letter and bearing of the sacred text, and altogether destitute of evidence

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* See Note A.

for its support. Granting that examples of anticipation may be found in other passages of Scripture, this surely will, by no means, prove that there is one in the case before us. For on the same ground it may be asserted, if mere assertion be sufficient to overturn the ordinary meaning of language, that though we are expressly told God blessed our first parents as soon as they proceeded from his hands,* he did not do so at that time, but at a subsequent period. Indeed, it may be laid down as a rule of universal application, that no such figure of speech is ever to be admitted, except when the drift of the narrative, or the truth of history, obviously demands it.

Still, with the view of evading the argument for the institution of the Sabbath at the close of creation, it has been as boldly maintained, that, even allowing God *then* blessed and sanctified the seventh day, he did so, not by way of application, but merely by way of intention or design; meaning, that he only decreed to appoint it for an end, to which it was not actually to be appropriated till the giving of the law, two thousand five hundred years after he had rested from his works. Now, where, I would ask, is the proof of such an allegation? It cannot be collected

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* Gen. i. 28. v. 2.

from the Mosaic account, nor, I will add, from any declaration within the whole compass of the inspired records. Nay, this is a doctrine which could never have entered into the mind of the sacred historian; for, if God be omniscient and immutable, that destination must be traced back, not to the period here mentioned, but to the eternity of his purpose, like every other event which takes place in time. The very conjunction *and* points out the honour conferred upon the seventh day as simultaneous with the completion of his works. And just as well may it be said that the employment of his creative energies, and his cessation from that employment, were simply *intentional*, as that his blessing and sanctifying that day, at the beginning, are to be thus considered. Indeed, not an instance can be produced from the Scriptures of the verb to *bless* having such an acceptation; and though it may sometimes be otherwise with that to *sanctify*, yet this latter is here restricted in its import by the sense in which the former is used.

The literal exposition of the sacred volume ought never to be departed from, without an obvious and imperious necessity; that is, unless that departure be sanctioned and required by the context, the scope of the writer, or the analogy of faith. Adopting this then as a just canon of in-

terpretation, we must attach that meaning to the words of Moses, which they are evidently intended to bear, namely, that the Sabbath was instituted on the first day after the world was created—a meaning which is in perfect harmony with the preceding narrative, and with every other statement of divine revelation on the subject. Any objections which have been urged against it, are of a negative kind, and of no force. One of these, and indeed the principal one, is drawn from the alleged silence respecting the observance of that day, before the gathering of manna in the wilderness of Sin. But what does this amount to, admitting there is no hint to the contrary, even the obscurest, to be met with, in the history of the world down to that event? It does not, in the smallest degree, disprove the appointment of the sacred rest at the close of creation. For we may as well be told that it was not kept during the administration of the Judges, from the death of Joshua to the time of Saul, a period of four hundred and fifty years,* because it is not once mentioned in the annals of that period; or that circumcision was not practised during the fourteen hundred and fifty years which elapsed between the settlement of the Is-

* Acts xiii. 20.

raelites in Canaan, and the circumcision of John the Baptist, inasmuch as the records of that long interval furnish no express instance of that rite having been performed.

Hence, if we deny the institution of the Sabbath at the beginning of the world, on the ground that it is not specifically noticed before the gathering of manna in the wilderness, we might, with as much propriety, contend that there was no day of sacred rest, and no rite of circumcision, in the respective periods to which we have now alluded. Besides, we know that in the antediluvian ages sacrifices were appointed, as symbolical representations of that great propitiatory oblation, which, in the fulness of time, the promised Messiah was to offer for the sins of mankind, although Moses makes no mention whatever of their appointment. We know that Enoch prophesied of the wickedness of the latter days, and of the second advent of the Lord, "with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds,"* although the records of the time in which he lived do not so much as hint at this prophecy. And we know that Noah was "a preacher of righteousness,"† during the

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* Jude 14, 15. † 2 Pet. ii. 5.

hundred and twenty years the ark was preparing, for the preservation of all who should repair to it for safety from the impending deluge, although in the annals of those times he is not once mentioned in that capacity.

Thus the argument against the early appointment of the Sabbath, from the supposed silence concerning it in the patriarchal dispensation, proves too much, and by doing so proves nothing at all. Indeed, the objection which this argument is brought forward to support, may be resolved into that love of system, or power of prepossession, which, by bending every thing to its own views, generates the grossest inconsistencies, and leads to the most illogical conclusions. There is surely no necessity, that the punctual observance of an institution, when once established, should be particularly mentioned, especially if to do so does not fall within the prescribed purpose of the inspired penman. The great design of Moses, be it remembered, was not to give a regular and detailed history of the world from the creation to the time in which he wrote; but to draw up a true account of the origination of all things—to describe the rise, the deliverance, and the polity of the Jewish nation, God's peculiar people—and, by tracing the genealogies of the patriarchs, to confirm the expectation of the

promised seed, and to show the fulfilment of prophecy. It was not his object, therefore, to relate the individual acts of divine worship; and, in a narrative so succinct and general, it is not to be wondered at, that the keeping of the Sabbath is not specifically noticed.

SECTION II.

The Institution of the Sabbath, at the close of Creation, argued from a few remote allusions to it in Sacred and Profane History.

NOTWITHSTANDING what has been urged against this doctrine from the silence of Scripture respecting it in those early ages, we are furnished with some hints, however obscure, of the Sabbath having been then known and observed. The first that occurs is recorded in the third and fourth verses of the fourth chapter of the book of Genesis, where it is said, that "in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord; and Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof." Now the expression, "in process of time," may be more literally rendered,

"in the end of days;"* and though we should admit that it was the close of the year when these two brothers presented their respective sacrifices, still there seems to be an implied allusion to the seventh day of the hebdomadal cycle, pointed out by God's having rested on it from his work of creation, as the day which was consecrated to his immediate service.

Indeed we may the more reasonably suppose that to this day reference is here made; because on any other supposition we cannot so well account for their ready concurrence in the discharge of their devotional duties. The jealousy and hatred which it is not improbable Cain previously felt and cherished towards Abel, arising from the disparity of their characters, would have prevented their meeting on that occasion, had they not been led to it by the practice of assembling on a stated season for the public worship of God. For although, when such a practice has been established, we can without difficulty admit that two persons, however hostile the one may be to the other, may appear together in the sanctuary, each with his own peculiar

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* See Note B.

views; yet when no day, regularly returning, is appointed for the purpose, and generally observed, we cannot so easily conceive that they would, of their own free inclinations, consent as to the time and place of performing their religious services. Besides, we are told that Cain, before he laid violent hands on Abel, decoyed him away into the fields; and had it not been that he was restrained by the presence of others in the resort for public devotion, he in all likelihood would have slain him on the spot.

But whatever may be thought of the argument from the season on which these offerings were made, or however doubtful and inconclusive it may be considered in itself, it possesses, when taken in connexion with the fact, that a septenary revolution of days was observed by the ancient patriarchs, a force which amounts at least to a presumptive proof. It is recorded of Noah, in the history of the flood, that "he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came in to him in the evening, and, lo, in her mouth was an olive branch plucked off. And he stayed yet

other seven days, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again unto him any more."*

Now what proper reason can be assigned why Noah observed this period of days, but that in keeping the Sabbath holy, he expected the blessing of Heaven upon him, and despatched his winged messenger to ascertain, whether God had again rested from the work of his hands? This series he attended to three different times; and surely it is not to be supposed, that in all this he was guided by mere chance, or that he had no specific object in view. Does not the circumstance rather afford a strong presumption, that he devoted the seventh day to religious services, and that, in consequence of doing so, he anticipated the favour of the Almighty to allay the swelling and desolating waters?

Should it be alleged that this arrangement was suggested to Noah by the different phases of the moon in her synodical revolution, it were sufficient to reply that, whatever might be his expectations at the quadratures, when the action of that luminary elevates the water where the action of the sun depresses it, and depresses it where the action of the sun elevates it—producing neap-tides; he could not look for the diminution of that ele-

* Gen. viii. 8—12.

mentat the opposition and conjunction, when, by the combined effects of these two bodies, the tides were raised to the greatest height. Yet it may farther be remarked, that as the deluge prevailed over the face of the whole earth, any hope founded on lunar influence would have been foolish in the extreme, since from that influence no permanent relief could have been obtained. Add to this, that Noah well knew that the flood was brought about by the immediate hand of God; and accordingly that the abatement of it was to be accomplished by the divine energy alone, no less miraculously displayed. Thus it is evident he could not calculate on the operation of general established laws for putting an end to that tremendous visitation of Providence; and it is therefore extremely probable that the expression "after seven days," refers to the last of the hebdomadal cycle, which God consecrated for his immediate service, as soon as he had ceased from exerting his creative power.

In addition to the evidence now adduced, for the observance of the Sabbath in the patriarchal ages, we read in the book of Genesis, twenty-ninth chapter and twenty-seventh verse, of a week as an acknowledged division of time. And though in this there is no express mention of the sacred rest, yet that division goes to shew that

the memory of the creation in six days, and of the sanctification of the seventh, had been kept up from the beginning. For whether the term, in the place referred to, denotes a literal or a prophetic week,—whether it alludes to the seven days which were usually spent in the celebration of a marriage solemnity, or to the seven years during which Jacob was yet to serve Laban before he received Rachel to wife,—it is evidently founded, as the name imports, on the customary distribution of time into hebdomadal periods.

The counting of time by such periods also obtained in the heathen world from the earliest ages. It was common to the Indians, the Syrians, the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Celtæ, the Sclavi, and to all the ancient nations, of which any records are preserved.* And that they held the seventh day as sacred, is a fact sufficiently evinced by the recorded testimonies of their own writers.†

It will not do to say that they borrowed this practice from the Jews, as it is unlikely they would imitate a people whom they hated, and whose religion and customs they despised. Nor will it avail to assert that it was first pointed out

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* Note C. † Note D.

to them by any consideration of the celestial phenomena; for though there be an obvious foundation in nature for the portioning of time into day and night, and months and years, there is none whatever for dividing it into weeks. The seven planets, whose names were first imposed on the days of the week by the Chaldean astrologers, could not certainly have been the occasion of that division; because, even admitting what is not true, that their knowledge of these planets was prior to the distribution in question, it remains to be asked, what imaginable connexion is there, except the mere coincidence of number, between those bodies and the hebdomadal cycle? And if this be all, no solid reason can be given why the ancients did not rather count time by periods of twelve days, according to the twelve signs in the zodiac, or by some other series suggested by the aggregate of stars in any of the constellations. But perhaps they were led to it by observing the different phases of the moon in passing through her orbit. This could not be the case; in as much as a lunation, or the space from change to change, which consists of twenty-nine days and a half, could not be measured with any degree of accuracy by cycles of seven days. The simplest way then, and indeed the only way in which we can account for the recognition of a septenary

number of days among all nations from the earliest ages is, that they derived it from patriarchal tradition concerning the transactions at the creation of the world, when God, having finished his works in *six* days, rested on the *seventh*.

SECTION III.

The Institution of the Sabbath at the close of Creation, argued from the eminent piety for which the patriarchs were distinguished.

In the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is said, that "through faith they obtained a good report;" and in the Old Testament history, that "Enoch walked with God,"*—that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and was righteous before him in that generation,"†—and that "Abraham obeyed the voice of the Lord, and kept his charge, his commandments, his statutes, and his laws."‡ Now, what are we to understand by the eulogium here bestowed on these ancient worthies? Certainly that they conscientiously and punctually observed whatever the Almighty had revealed and enjoined, as to

* Gen. v. 22. † Gen. vi. 8. vii. 1. ‡ Gen. xxvi. 5.

the nature and extent of their duty, not only in believing his declarations concerning the original of all things, and his merciful intentions through the promised Seed, but also in regarding his institutions and enactments, in reference to the time and manner of his worship. And they did all this, though we do not find that any particular code of laws is recorded in the Mosaic account of these early ages. But the fact that they kept the commandments of God, which are not there specifically mentioned, is an incontestable proof that these were made known to them; and why should not the Sabbath be one of the appointed institutions, for the observance of which they were so highly celebrated? Indeed, Manasseh Ben Israel, a learned Jew, says, in his book *De Creat. prob.* 8. where he gives a comment on Gen. xxvi. 5, "Quo loco custodia Sabbati intelligetur," in this place the keeping of the Sabbath is understood.

That this day was celebrated in those early times will appear the more probable, if we consider the necessity of public worship for the growth of piety in the soul. We have seen, that before the flood God had a seed to serve him. But to give religion a firm and settled hold on the mind, it would be requisite that some season, regularly returning, should be fixed on and scrupulously

observed. For had the patriarchs been left to perform their devotional duties as opportunity or inclination prompted, it is more than likely, from the known corruption of human nature, which was the same then as it is at present, that the disposition to procrastinate would have influenced their conduct, and lowered the tone of their religious character. It would have happened, that what they might have done at any time, they would not have done at all. Yes; such is the seducing tendency of secularities, that unless they had been set loose from all worldly avocations by the stated return of the Sabbath, the intrusion of idle visitors, or interruptions from persons on business, would have withdrawn their attention from the more important concerns of their immortal souls.

The impression besides, which is made by the devotions and meditations of a *whole* day in seven, set apart for these purposes, would be much deeper and more lasting than that which could have been produced by the mere *occasional* and transient exercises of religion on the other days of the week. And the reason of this is obvious. In the latter case, these exercises, from their being associated with the common routine of life, would have been burdened and deadened by their too immediate contact with cares, from

which they ought to be altogether abstracted. And, in the former case, they would come, from the length of time they were revolved and kept before the view of the mind, to be connected more intimately with the feelings of the heart, and to be more conspicuous and beneficial in their practical effects. As the air-balloon, lightened of its ballast, gains in its ascensive power, so the soul, freed from the clogging concerns and anxieties of time, rises with increasing ardour and delight towards the only object of adoration and worship, and the only fountain of spiritual illumination and strength and happiness.

In addition to all this, it may be remarked, that if we be enjoined to "forsake not the assembling of ourselves together,"* this injunction, as it is given on the authority of God, must be founded in the fitness of things, or in its tendency to promote his glory by the advancement of our eternal interests; and that if this be true, we cannot for a moment suppose that the Father of mercies, who had revealed his will to the patriarchs, would withhold from them so great an advantage. Nay, taking always their eminent piety into the account, it is even

* Heb. x. 25.

certain that their practice was to keep the Sabbath in a religious manner. And farther, as God is good to all, it was befitting that they, who received so many blessings in common, should meet together for the purpose of expressing to him their united gratitude and praise. Hence it may be concluded, that the day which the Almighty sanctified at the close of creation, was observed as a season of sacred rest from the beginning of the world.

SECTION IV.

The Institution of the Sabbath, at the close of Creation, argued from the manner in which its approach was intimated at the giving of manna in the desert, and in which the mention of it was afterwards introduced in the Fourth Commandment.

The Israelites, in their journeying towards the Holy Land, came into the wilderness of Sin, where, in consequence of their murmuring for want of bread, they were miraculously supplied with manna from heaven. Of this they were ordered by Moses to gather each of them, every morning, as much as would serve them for that day, and no more. But when, in obedience to his command, they had on the sixth day collected

twice their former quantity, the elders of the congregation, whose province it probably was to superintend the distribution, came to him for instruction in a matter, which had not yet been fully explained to them. His answer was the following:—"This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning."*

Now, it is obvious that these words contain no formal institution of a new ordinance, but simply the recognition and enforcement of one that was before known. The Israelites expressed no surprise, when the seventh day was specified as the reason of their collecting a double portion of manna on the sixth, which, from their general character, we may well suppose they would have done, had they been previously ignorant of the early appointment of that ordinance. The truth seems to be, that under the rigorous servitude to which they were doomed by their taskmasters in Egypt, they had not been suffered to observe the Sabbath; and that though they had not forgotten its original appropriation to sacred purposes, they

* Exod. xvi. 23.

had at least laid aside all regard for its proper observance, or lost all definite ideas of its nature and obligation. I do not mean to insinuate that the day, on which they were at present ordered to rest, was the seventh in the regular weekly revolution from the commencement of the world; as it may have been the seventh from the time of the first falling of manna from heaven, and also the seventh from the accomplishment of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. But be this as it may, the devoting of *one* day in seven to the Lord, was all that the primitive institution required; and Moses, by divine authority, here enforced it upon them as a wise and salutary enactment.

If at this period the sacred rest had been first instituted, then, unquestionably, it would have been mentioned with more particularity, or with a fuller explanation of its object and bearings. Yet not a word is said about the reason of its appointment, nor about its duration among the Israelites as a festival; a silence which certainly would not have been observed, had that consecrated season been before unknown to them. When Moses intimated to the elders, "To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath," he only reminded them of a solemnity with which they were previously acquainted; and

he did so, with a view to introduce his directions concerning the manner in which they were to dispose of the double portion of manna, which the people had gathered on the sixth day.

This argument is confirmed by the language of the fourth commandment. In that commandment, the Israelites are not told of the sacred rest, as an ordinance of which they were before ignorant; but as one which, although established at the close of creation, they had ever shewn themselves prone to neglect. The expression, "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy," implies merely the revival of a former institution; an institution now sanctioned and recommended by ensigns of the most solemn and impressive majesty, and formally engrossed in that code of moral laws, which is binding upon all mankind to the latest ages. And the reason assigned for the observance of that festival, is the same that was assigned for it immediately on the Creator's ceasing from the works of his hands: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it."* Thus, the previous appointment of that day of rest is not only pre-

* Exod. xx. 11.

supposed in this precept of the decalogue, but the time and the grounds of its original institution are explicitly stated.

Now, had the Sabbath been first pointed out and sanctioned, on the falling of bread miraculously in the wilderness of Sin, the argument, by which the duties required in the fourth commandment are forced upon the attention, would have been more appropriately expressed in these words: "For during six days God rained manna from heaven, and rested on the seventh; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it." But in place of reference to any such event, the reason alleged is borrowed from the divine procedure at the creation of the world, when God wrought six days, and rested on the seventh. Hence our thoughts are irresistibly carried back to that period, and not to the promulgation of the law, nor to the giving of manna, for the original appointment of the Sabbatic solemnity.

It is no objection to the foregoing reasoning, that, in the fifth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, where the decalogue is repeated, it is said, as an enforcement of the obligation which the fourth precept of that code imposes, "Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out

thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day." All that is here urged is a reason peculiar to the Jews alone, who, by the gracious interposition of Heaven, had been delivered from the most galling and oppressive bondage, and who, in memory of that deliverance, as well as in gratitude for the divine goodness by which it was accomplished, were to observe the Sabbath, by desisting from all servile labour, and providing that their children, their domestics, their cattle, and even the stranger within their gates, should also rest from all secular employment. To keep that day holy was a duty binding upon them, and upon the whole human race, in consequence of God's having rested on the seventh day, and set it apart for religious purposes, as soon as he had finished the material system. The Jews were already acquainted with their obligations arising from that transaction; but, as they were apt to profane the Sabbatic institution, their deliverance from Egyptian bondage is employed as a supplementary argument for discharging the duties which it implies. So that while the fourth commandment, as recorded in the book of Exodus, refers to mankind in general, that commandment, as

recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, respects the Jews in particular, or is founded on their peculiar circumstances as a church and a nation.

But though the redemption of the Jews, from the hands of their Egyptian oppressors, be urged as an additional motive for their remembering the Sabbath; still the resting of God on the seventh day is the ground of its original appointment for sacred purposes, and also the primary source of its obligation on them, and on every individual of our race. And, accordingly, we find in the book of Exodus, thirty-first chapter, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth verse, where it is spoken of as "a sign between God and the children of Israel for ever," and as "a perpetual covenant," or badge of the special relation in which they stood to him as his people; that the general reason for their observance of the Sabbath is, that "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh he rested and was refreshed." Its being a sign or covenant, therefore, by no means restricts it to them as an ordinance; and, consequently, goes not one iota to prove that it was not instituted at the beginning of the world, or two thousand five hundred years before it was solemnly promulgated on Sinai. But, besides being to all nations and to all ages a memorial of the creation, it was to the Jews a

memorial also of their release from the grievous thraldom under which they laboured in Egypt, and a test of the relation into which they now entered as the chosen inheritance of God; just as the rainbow, after the flood, was employed as a token that the Almighty would no more overwhelm the human race with a deluge of water, although, undoubtedly, the laws of reflection and refraction by which that beautiful phenomenon is produced, existed previously to that awful event.

Indeed the very covenant above alluded to, is the identical covenant which God made with the Israelites at Horeb.* Now this covenant embraced obedience, not only to the fourth commandment, but equally to every precept contained in the decalogue. And if the specification of the Sabbath, under that designation, is to be alleged as a proof that it belonged exclusively to the Jews, and that it was not binding upon them before the giving of the law; then, upon the same ground, it may be affirmed that they were under no obligation to perform those moral duties which were its other articles, and which were even pointed out to them by the light of nature. But,

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* Deut. v. 1—4.

besides being a branch of the federal transaction at Horeb, the observance of the Sabbath was a sign, by which that people were distinguished from the surrounding idolatrous nations. It served to evince that they worshipped, as the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and their almighty deliverer from Egyptian bondage; thus manifesting that they stood to him in the double relation, of his creatures, and his peculiar treasure.

Nor let it be objected to the origin of the Sacred Rest at the close of creation, that it is said, "The Lord gave to the Jews the Sabbath,"* in the wilderness, and "made known to them his holy Sabbath, and commanded them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses his servant."† These expressions do not shew that it was then appointed for the first time. On the contrary, when taken in connexion with the history of the matter to which they refer, all that they are warranted to bear, by any fair and legitimate construction, is simply, that the Almighty had revived a former injunction, and enforced obedience to it by new sanctions, borrowed from the peculiar circumstances of that people. It is

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* Exod. xvi. 29. † Neh. ix. 14.

perfectly true that he gave it, or made it known to them at that period; but then, from their proneness to forget it, he only repeated what he had done more than once before. Independently of other considerations, this is evident from the fact, that among the statutes, precepts, and laws, which he enjoined upon them in the desert, in addition to the ordinance of the Sabbath, were included the institution of sacrifice, tithes, and circumcision, and all those moral duties which are discoverable by the light of nature. Now these, it will be admitted, existed long before that period, nay from the very commencement of the world; and, therefore, nothing farther is meant, than that they were at present more solemnly and impressively promulgated than they had hitherto been. And it is strange that any person, who has not a system to support, should fix on such phraseology as a proof that the Sabbath was unknown till the falling of manna, or the giving of the law

SECTION V.

The Institution of the Sabbath, at the close of Creation, argued from the language of the Apostle to the Hebrews.

In the fourth chapter, third and fourth verses of that epistle, are these words: "For we, which have believed, do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, If they shall enter into my rest; although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake, in a certain place, of the seventh day, on this wise, And God did rest on the seventh day from all his works."

To understand aright the meaning of this passage, and to see its full bearing on the subject before us, we must advert to the scope and tendency of the Apostle's reasoning. It is obvious, that his great object was to gain the attention of the Hebrews to the overtures of the Gospel, and to urge upon them, by setting before their view the awful example of their fathers in the wilderness, the faithful discharge of the duties to which they were called, and steadfastness in "the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope unto the end." And still more to stimulate their obedience, and secure

their persevering activity in the divine life, he told them, that how great and numerous soever were the temptations they had to resist, and the difficulties they had to encounter, in pursuing unwaveringly the course which Christianity prescribed, there was a rest in reserve for the people of God, into which they should assuredly enter when their warfare was once accomplished. But he, at the same time, declared that, if they hardened their hearts, or, through unbelief of the divine promises, departed from the living God, they should fall short of that blessed rest, and incur the punishment of their apostacy and crimes.

Now, that the Hebrews might make no mistake as to the rest of which he was speaking, he apprised them that he did not intend the seventh day Sabbath, which the Creator sanctified when he ceased from the production of any new works, and which he blessed as a season of complacency and delight, to be observed by man throughout the succeeding ages of the world; because they, and all to whom that institution was known, already partook of its advantages. Nor did he mean the repose of Canaan, into which Joshua, the son of Nun, and successor of Moses, introduced them; in as much as the oath of exclusion which God sware in his wrath, and uttered by the mouth of David, many years after, could not

prevent their admission to a privilege, of which they were now in possession. The rest which he had in view, and to which he directed their attention as a motive to obedience, was a heavenly rest, promised to the spiritual seed of Abraham, of which the Sabbath, appointed at the beginning of time, and the cessation of the Israelites from their wanderings and their toils in the desert, were appropriate and expressive representations.

Thus it is evident, that the Apostle's argument to enforce upon the Hebrews fidelity to God in the observance of his statutes, is a proof that the Sabbath was first instituted at the close of creation, and not in the wilderness of Sin, nor at the giving of the law on Sinai. It was, indeed, no part of his design to demonstrate the existence of that ordinance from the earliest period; he only mentions it as a step in that process of reasoning, by which he points out to these Hebrews the repose of Heaven as distinct from that of the Sabbath, or that of Canaan. When he reminds them of the oath of the Almighty, as recorded in the ninety-fifth psalm, debarring the rebellious and disobedient from his rest, he adds, in obvious reference to the language of Moses in the second chapter of Genesis, "Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." He shews that the promise

of this rest to the faithful, which implies in it the threatening of exclusion to the unbelieving and ungodly, could not allude to the appointment of the Sabbath, since that took place at the beginning, when the Creator rested on the seventh day.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE MORAL AND PERPETUAL OBLIGATION OF THE SABBATH.

ACCURATE conceptions of the nature, and extent, and permanency of the Sabbatic institution, are of the utmost importance. They are intimately connected with the proper discharge of the duties to which we are called; and we cannot be ignorant that if this institution exists in all its force under the Christian dispensation, we are one day responsible to God, for the manner in which we observe it, or for the improvement which we make of the advantages it affords Now, the position which some have maintained, that it was a part of the Mosaic ritual, abolished at the death of Christ, will, it is hoped, be seen in the sequel to be unsupported by evidence, and altogether unfounded in truth.

In preparing the way for the elucidation of this branch of the subject, it will be proper to distinguish the laws of God into natural and posi-

tive. A *natural* law is that which, though it may be published by divine revelation, is discoverable by reason, and recognised by conscience; of this sort are those which enjoin the worship of God, —require filial affection towards parents,—and prohibit blasphemy, theft, and murder. A *positive* law, again, is that which the light of reason could not of itself have pointed out, however equitable it may appear when once made known, and which depends for its authority and sanction on the will of the sovereign Legislator; as, for instance, those which forbade to eat of the fruit of the tree of life,—established the Jewish ritual,—and appointed the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

This division of the laws of God is certainly preferable to the distribution of them into moral and ceremonial; in as much as the latter is not founded on a sufficiently just and appropriate distinction. The morality of an action does not consist solely and exclusively in its accordance with those rules of life, which are dictated by the exercise of our rational powers, or which arise from the relative situation in which we are placed; but also in the observation of any ordinance which the King Eternal may be pleased to institute for the accomplishment of his purposes, although that ordinance could not beforehand

have been discovered by us. His will, whatever may be the mode by which it is made known, is clearly binding on us, as the guide and standard of our conduct; and our duty by no means depends on the perpetuity of the obligation, but on the commanding nature of that obligation so long as it exists. The enactments of God must always enjoin what in his wisdom is fittest to be done, whether we may be able to see that fitness or not. And it cannot be denied that it was moral in a Jew, during the continuance of the legal dispensation, to perform the religious rites prescribed in the Mosaic ritual; and that it is now moral in a Christian to observe the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, during the continuance of the Gospel economy. The morality of obedience to these institutions arises from the authority of him who appointed them; and this morality is commensurate in its binding power with the duration of the institutions themselves.*

Now let it be remarked, that the law of the Sabbath is of a mixed kind; that is, it is founded partly on natural dictate, and partly on positive institution. From the light of nature it is evident, that the Creator ought to be worshipped by his intel-

* Note E.

ligent creatures in a social, as well as in private or individual capacity; and that, for the promotion and accomplishment of this purpose, a stated season, regularly returning, is absolutely necessary. But this is all the length which unassisted reason can go; and accordingly it became God himself to determine whether one day in *seven* or one in any *other* series, should be set apart and appropriated for his service. In the exercise, therefore, of his sovereign prerogative, he has not only enjoined his worship, but named that proportion of our time, which he claims as exclusively due to himself. Having made these preliminary observations, I shall now proceed to shew more particularly the moral and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath.

SECTION I.

The moral and perpetual Obligation of the Sabbath, argued from its appointment at the close of Creation.

It was formerly shewn, not only from the words of Moses, in the second chapter of Genesis, but also from notices in the antediluvian history,—the counting of time by *weeks*, and the sacredness of the number *seven* among the heathen

from the earliest ages,—the transactions which took place in the wilderness of Sin, and the manner in which the fourth commandment is introduced,—and the reasoning of the Apostle to the Hebrews, concerning the rest which God has promised to his faithful and obedient people,—that one whole day, after every six days of labour, was appointed and consecrated for the express and exclusive service of the great Creator, as soon as he had finished the works of his hands.

This consideration shews, and shews distinctly, that the Sabbath was not intended for the Jews alone. When it was first appointed, Adam and Eve were the only human individuals existing; and if it was befitting that they should devote every returning seventh day to the worship of God, the same reason which bound this duty upon them as his creatures, also binds it upon all their offspring to the end of time. As they were the original stock from which the whole of our race descended, they were, by consequence, equally related to those two divisions of mankind which afterwards took place. Hence the Jews were no more concerned in the Sabbath than the heathens were, until the former were more directly obliged to observe it, by the peculiar relation into which they entered as the covenanted people of God. And if it was the pri-

mary intention of the supreme Legislator that this day should be kept holy by all, and if he has never revoked the command which enjoined them to sanctify it, it must evidently impose a moral and perpetual obligation.

Now God has nowhere annulled the institution of the Sabbath. And the language of the Apostle to the Colossians, second chapter, sixteenth and seventeenth verses, by no means militates against this assertion. His words are the following :—" Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which were a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ."

Although the term Sabbath be frequently employed in Scripture to signify the Jewish festivals without distinction, in the observance of which there was a complete cessation from the ordinary occupations of life; yet from the connexion in which it here stands, with the expressions, " an Holy Day," and " the New-moon," it is obvious that this term designates the peculiar day kept sacred by the Jews, as their weekly Sabbath. What then are the spirit and intendment of the Apostle's exhortation? Some Judaizing teachers at Colosse, it would appear, were for imposing on the heathen converts in that place, the neces-

sity of celebrating the Jewish festivals, and the particular day of the Jewish Sabbath. Now, the Apostle put these converts on their guard against a compliance with such an imposition; because it recommended, as of lasting importance, what were but shadows of things to come, and consequently abolished at the death of Christ. The morality of the Sabbatic institution does not consist in consecrating that *precise* day, on which the Jews rested, to the immediate service of God,—a day which probably was not the seventh from the creation. All that it requires is, that *one* day in seven, after *six* days of labour, shall be devoted to that purpose. The day which the Jews celebrated as their Sabbath, was prescribed as a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt; and as it was therefore so far positive in its nature, it was destined, when the plans of Providence, regarding the redemption of man, were completely unfolded, to give place to another, which was to be appointed under the Christian dispensation, and to continue in force to the end of the world.

The same thing will also appear, on considering more particularly for what purpose the Sabbath was originally intended. Here we shall again have recourse to the words of institution recorded in the book of Genesis, second chapter,

third and fourth verses; and in quoting these we shall adopt, as the most correct and definite, the translation proposed by Dr Kennicot, in his learned "Dissertation on the Oblations of Cain and Abel." It is as follows:—"And God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made; and God caused (man) to bless and worship on the seventh day, and ordered (him) to sanctify it."*

Now what is meant by the injunction here given? It embraces the whole duty which the intelligent creature owes to the Creator; and, in addition to the private exercises of religion on the other days of the week, points out the obligation of setting apart the *seventh* day exclusively for this purpose. The import of the expression, "to bless and worship," is so obvious, as to require little comment or illustration. It signifies to render to the supreme Being our reverential gratitude for his goodness to us in our creation—for the distinction he has conferred upon us in the scale of existence—for the wise and benevolent arrangements of his providence—and for the admirable display of his glorious perfections in the works of his hands; and, at the same time, to

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* Note F.

implore the continuance of his favour, in upholding us by the arm of his power—in delivering us from danger—in supplying our daily returning wants—and in promoting our spiritual and eternal interests. And the expression, "ordered (him) to sanctify it," is no less evident in its meaning. It implies our duty to consecrate that season for the end now mentioned—to keep it as a rest from worldly employments,—and to spend it as a portion of time due to the service of God, after the support he has afforded us during the six days of labour on our own account.

This being the object for which the Sabbath was at first instituted, as implied in the words "God caused man to bless and worship on the seventh day, and ordered him to sanctify it," it is manifest that the appointment of the sacred rest did not concern the Jews merely, but the whole human race. The only two individuals who then existed were Adam and Eve; and the command which was given to them, was given alike, as we have already observed, to all their posterity, without exception. Besides, there is nothing in the nature or reason of that command which could restrict it to the Jews. For the Gentiles also, as the creatures of God, were under obligations to adore his perfections, as displayed in his works,—to express their dependence

on his power and goodness,—and to worship him in solemn acts of gratitude and praise. Hence we are constrained, in all fairness, to conclude, that the law of the Sabbath, which is thus universal in its application, and inseparable from the relation in which we are placed, is intended to continue in force throughout the present state of being.

But waving the translation of Dr Kennicot, the same conclusion results from the passage, as it stands in our authorised version: "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." Admitting this to be the true rendering of the original, what meaning is intended to be conveyed by the actions here expressed? It is evident, that for God to *bless* the seventh day cannot imply, in strict propriety, that he rejoiced in it as a cessation from toilsome labour, on his own account. Such an idea is altogether inconsistent with the absolute perfections of his nature; and, accordingly, the prophet asks, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of all the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary."* The true import of the phrase, therefore, must be, that he pronounced that day a season of happi-

* Isaiah xl. 28.

ness to the human race—a season destined to relieve them from worldly cares and employments, and to lead their thoughts and affections towards the great Author of all created existence, and of all substantial and permanent enjoyment. And this sense of the expression is confirmed by the only legitimate acceptation of the next clause, he " sanctified it." In the language of Scripture, the verb, to sanctify, when applied to an inanimate object, or used as a term of designation, always signifies to consecrate, or set apart, for sacred purposes. Now, no person will contend that such a sanctification could have any reference to God himself; for since he is a being of the most perfect holiness, every day, in this view, must be alike in his estimation. The conclusion then is, that if one day in seven was appointed, at the close of creation, for religious and devotional duties, it must concern the whole of mankind, on whom it was indiscriminately enjoined.

Indeed, we are bound to keep the Sabbatic institution from the very example of God himself. For reason and Scripture combine to evince that he ought to be imitated, in as far as his perfections *are* imitable. Now, though we do not say that he kept that sacred rest, in the precise sense and manner inculcated on us; yet on that day he ceased from his works of creation, and exercised

a holy complacency in surveying the finished system, which his wisdom, and power, and goodness, had constructed. Surely, then, on the Sabbath, which, we are expressly told, was made for man, we are called on, by the authority of this high precedent, to desist from all secular employment, and to meditate on the works and the ways of God. And this is a duty which, from the consideration just stated, is incumbent, to the latest ages, on every individual of our race, to whom the light of divine revelation is communicated.

Farther, it must not be forgotten, that the Sabbath was instituted in the time of human innocency, or before sin had found its way into the fair creation of God. It accordingly dates its origin from a period when no religious types or symbols existed; and as those which were subsequently introduced, under the Mosaic economy, had an immediate reference to Christ, the promised Messiah, they were designed to prefigure a purer and more perfect system of religion, and to prepare for its reception at the appointed season. Ere the lapse of our primeval parents, and the numerous evils which followed in its train, the Redeemer was not made known to them; and, for this reason, any such representation would have been to them a shadow without a

substance, or a sign without a thing signified. It therefore follows, that the institution of the Sabbath, stripped of the adventitious circumstances which afterwards attended its republication to the Jews, is morally and strictly binding on all mankind, without distinction and reserve, down to the final consummation of all things.

Again, every institution of God must bear the stamp and character of wisdom; and, as the day of sacred rest is of his appointment, we may well suppose, nay, we may certainly conclude, that it was intended for the best of purposes. But wisdom consists in choosing the most excellent ends, and in adopting the most appropriate and efficacious means for their attainment. And if to worship and serve the God who made and upholds us, and, by doing so, to promote our own spiritual and eternal welfare, be the highest and most important object at which we can aim; and if to set apart and observe a day, regularly returning, be the most direct and successful method by which all this is to be accomplished,—then, unquestionably, the obligation of the Sabbath must continue in all its force, as long as its utility can render it necessary, that is, as long as there are human beings to be trained up for heaven and for happiness.

SECTION II.

The moral and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath argued from the manner in which the Fourth Commandment was given, the situation which it holds in the Decalogue, and the duty which it imposed on the stranger in the Jewish state.

THE importance of the Decalogue, of which the law of the Sabbath was a part, appears from the grand and majestic solemnity with which it was proclaimed on Mount Sinai. Smoke, and clouds, and thunderings, and lightnings, and the sound of a trumpet, were its awful and impressive attendants; and the scene was altogether such as astonished and overwhelmed with terror the Israelites who were encamped in the plain below. On this occasion the ten commandments were spoken by the Almighty with an audible voice, and were written with his own finger on two tables of stone. In these respects they were distinguished from those *national* and temporary institutions which were simply communicated through Moses, and by him recorded in a book. And as they were pronounced aloud, to intimate their universal extent, and the supreme authority with which they were sanctioned; so they were also inscribed on stone, to represent the perpe-

tual obligation which they impose. Nay, such is their paramount and never-ceasing value, that Jehovah condescended to write them a *second* time, after Moses, from the wrath with which he was moved against the idolatry of the people in worshipping the golden calf which they had set up, during his absence on the Mount, had broken the tables which contained them. Tables of stone were anciently employed to denote the perpetuity of the inscription which they bore; and in the case before us, they were direct emblems of "the fleshly tables of the heart,"* on which the divine laws are impressed by the Spirit of the living God, when he exerts his renewing and sanctifying energies.

Let it also be observed, that the precepts of the Decalogue, thus solemnly promulgated, and thus written with the finger of God, were not like the mere national and temporary institutions placed *beside* the ark, but were deposited *within* it. Now, as the ark was a symbol of the Divine presence, this arrangement put these precepts, as it were, under the peculiar protection of Heaven, and represented, in a very striking manner, their supreme authority, essential importance, and in-

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* 2 Cor. iii. 3.

dissoluble obligation. And as the mercy-seat, which covered this sacred chest, was a type of Christ, who came to magnify the law, and make it honourable, and thus to cover or expiate our sins by his meritorious righteousness, it clearly shews that the ten commandments are still binding on us, as a rule of life, though, from the weakness of our fallen nature, obedience to them cannot now justify us in the sight of God. These commandments, being the articles of the covenant, into which Jehovah, in his goodness, entered with his people, the repository in which they were laid up, is in consequence designated "the ark of the covenant," or "the ark of the testimony;" and their fulfilment being guaranteed by Jesus Christ, whom the covering of the ark prefigured, he, for a similar reason, is spoken of in Scripture as the surety or mediator of that covenant. Hence the conclusion is irresistible, that those articles, as to all their items, must continue in force to the end of time.

But as it is generally admitted that the moral laws, dictated by nature, and recognised by conscience, are as unchangeable as the great Creator himself, who established them, the question comes to be, Is the duty of observing the Sabbath a part of these laws? Or is it to be ranked among those ceremonial and national institutions,

which were intended to serve merely a temporary purpose? Nothing is plainer, than that the precept which enjoins us to keep holy that day of rest, is one of "the ten commandments," as they are expressly styled in the inspired volume, which were written with the finger of God, and by his direction placed within the ark. And what possible reason can be assigned for the situation which that injunction occupies, except that, from its nature and importance, it imposes the same unceasing obligation, and is entitled to the same undeviating regard as the other *nine*, about the permanency of which there is no dispute? Nay, if we consider that it is the only one of the *ten* which is guarded by the solemn admonition, "Remember," and which is enforced by the example of God himself, it will seem to be even of higher value and interest, and to be, when duly observed, more intimately connected with every thing that is dignified in character, and happy in its results. Unquestionably, although as to the particular day on which it called the Jews to rest from secular employment, it was positive, and designed to be changed; yet, as to its substance, or the duty of consecrating to the Lord *one* day in seven, it is, in all ages, binding on every human being to whom it is known. In short, the same authority which issues the prohi-

bition, "Thou shalt not kill," or "Thou shalt not steal," also delivers the precept, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy;" and all these are proclaimed with the same circumstances of grandeur,—written in the same remarkable manner,—inculcated in the same code of laws,—and preserved with the same care in the ark of the covenant. Hence, it is evident to any man of fair and impartial judgment, that the law of the fourth commandment is intended for all mankind, and obligatory on the Gentiles as well as the Jews; and that, from that law, wherever the knowledge of it extends, no consideration whatever can exempt an individual of our race.

This conclusion is strengthened by the duty which the Sabbath imposed on the stranger in the Jewish state. Those foreigners, and there were many of them who lived among the Jews, were divided into two great classes, distinguished by the respective titles of "Proselytes of the Covenant," and "Proselytes of the Gate." By submitting to the rite of circumcision, the former were introduced within the pale of the church, and bound by all the laws and ceremonies peculiar to that people. And the latter, though they did not embrace the discriminating tenets of Judaism, were yet permitted to remain among the Jews undisturbed, on the condition of their re-

nouncing idolatry, and observing the patriarchal institutions which were embodied in the ten commandments, and binding on all mankind.

Now, by "the stranger within the gates," alluded to in the fourth commandment, we are to understand a proselyte who worshipped the true God, without adopting the peculiarities of the Jewish religion. This person was bound to keep the Sabbath, but was not allowed to eat of the passover. And the reason simply was, that the one being appointed at the close of creation, was intended to serve a purpose, in which every son of Adam, as a creature of God, is equally concerned; and that the other, being merely a festival tending to commemorate a particular event in the history of the Jews, was, in its meaning and object, restricted to them, together with those foreigners who embraced all the articles of their religious belief. This then shews, that while the passover was a *national*, the Sabbath was an *universal* institution; and that, accordingly, it is binding on the whole of our race to the latest ages.

SECTION III.

The Moral and Perpetual Obligation of the Sabbath argued from Old Testament Prophecies, concerning the observance of it in New Testament times.

PROPHECY differs from history in no material respect, the one being a prospective detail of future contingent events, and the other a retrospective narrative of those that are past. And the inspiration of the prophet, and the fidelity of the historian, render the statements of both equally entitled to our credit and reception. Whatever, therefore, is predicted in the ancient Scriptures concerning the duties to be practised under the Gospel, must be regarded as the law of the Redeemer's kingdom, and acted upon, as bearing the sanction of his high authority. Now, in reference to the Sabbath, we find that the prophets speak of it as an institution which was to be in force under the Christian dispensation.

The first passage, to this effect, which I shall here notice, is the twenty-fourth verse of the hundred and eighteenth psalm: "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

The two verses immediately preceding these words, are frequently quoted in the New Testament, and always applied to the resurrection of Christ, who was rejected and put to death by the Jews. Now, the day on which he rose in triumph from the grave, and thus became "the Head Stone of the Corner," or the strength and support of the spiritual building, his Church, is here styl- "ed the day which the Lord hath made." And what is the import of this expression? Every day, unquestionably, that dawns upon the world is alike the result of his appointment, for he claims it as his unalienable prerogative to form the light and to create darkness.* The phraseology, therefore, must have a more peculiar and appropriate meaning, than merely to designate the general law by which he regulates the earth's diurnal revolution. Without considering it as obviously employed to point out, by way of eminence, a day which the Almighty has distinguished above all others, it is impossible to attach any definite acceptation and bearing to the prophet's language. This then was the *First* day of the week, which witnessed the Redeemer's return from the dead, and the accomplished salvation of

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* Is. xlv. 7.

our race; and which, in every hebdomadal cycle was to be observed with gratitude and joy, to the end of time, as the Christian Sabbath, commemorative of that glorious event.

The only other prophetic passage, which it may be necessary to mention as bearing upon the subject before us, is that which occurs in the beginning of the fifty-sixth chapter of the book of Isaiah, in these words: "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant: even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of

the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant: even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called An house of prayer for all people."

That the prophet here alludes to the period, when "the middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile was to be broken down, and both to be admitted to equal advantages, is evident from the language in which he conveys his prediction. After declaring, in reference to that period, blessed is the man that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil, he anticipates and removes a fear which those persons might be apt to feel who, though they worshipped the true God, were yet prevented, by legal disabilities, from sharing in the full privileges of the Jewish church. In case they should be disposed to say, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people, because by the law of the Mosaic dispensation they had not formerly been permitted to perform their devotions in the same court with the Jews, who were in covenant with God,—he tells them that that distinction should be done away under the Gospel eco-

nomy, when "Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female," would be "all one in Christ Jesus."* Then the eunuch who keeps the Sabbath,—chooses the things which please the Lord, and takes hold of his covenant of grace, should be admitted within the walls of God's house, and distinguished by a place and a name better than those of sons and of daughters. And then also the sons of the stranger, who join themselves to the Lord, to be his servants, who keep the Sabbath from polluting it, and who take hold of the covenant of God, should be brought to his holy mountain, and made joyful in his house of prayer.

From this it is plain, that after the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the Gentile put on an equal footing with the Jew, the Sabbatic institution would be in force, and that the observance of it, as an essential part of the holiness of life, would be accompanied with the most important blessings to the soul. Hence the conclusion is obvious, that it is of moral and perpetual obligation; or that it is destined to be a season of sacred rest, during all the triumphs of the cross of Christ upon earth.

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* Gal. iii. 28.

SECTION IV.

The moral and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath argued from the declarations of our Lord Jesus Christ, and from the language of the Apostle James.

It was not necessary, that in the New Testament there should be any direct precept to enforce the duty of observing the day of sacred rest; since its original appointment at the close of creation, and its subsequent inculcation in the Decalogue, are of themselves sufficient evidence of its standing and unchangeable authority. Yet, if in the Gospel it be not ratified by express injunction, it is so by fair implication. "Think not," says our Lord, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."* Now, that the law here meant is that moral code, consisting of ten commandments, which was proclaimed by Jehovah himself on Mount Sinai, and which it was a principal object of the prophets, through subse-

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* Matt. v. 17, 18.

quent ages, to explain and enforce, is obvious from various considerations. In the following context it is said, that "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven;" or, as the expression intimates, shall never enter that kingdom. This could not be affirmed of the ritual institutions, in as much as the Apostles, who were the appointed founders of the Church, uniformly taught, in allusion to these, that Christ had "blotted out the hand-writing of ordinances, and nailed it to his cross."* Besides, that law, which it was the great design of our Lord in his sermon to vindicate against the false glosses and corruptions of the Scribes and Pharisees, could not be the ceremonial law, since the latter they literally and rigidly observed, even to superstition. It was, therefore, the precepts of the Decalogue which were never to pass away; and, as the Sabbath was one of these, it must be of moral and perpetual obligation.

Again, Christ, in addressing his disciples in reference to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, when, to save their lives, they should be constrained to flee to the surrounding moun-

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* Col. ii. 14.

tains, says to them, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath-day."* It is plain that he cannot here mean the particular day of the Jewish Sabbath; for that day was changed about *forty* years previously to the event which he now foretold. Yet, as the Christian Sabbath, which succeeded in its room, was of equal obligation, he directed his followers, in their supplications at the throne of grace, to beseech the supreme Ruler of all, so to order, in the procedure of his wise providence, that this calamity might not befall them on the season of sacred rest; because, if it did so, it would add to their distress to be obliged to seek their personal safety by escape, at a time when they should be attending the ordinances of God, and delighting in communion with him.

It will not do to argue, that the Christians were enjoined to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath, lest it should expose them to the indignation of the Jews. For it is well known that ever since the time of the Maccabees, that people deemed it lawful not only to flee from an enemy, but even to fight for their lives on that day.† Hence the origin of the maxim,

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* Matt. xxiv. 20. † 1 Macc. ii. 40, 41.

periculum mortis tollit Sabbatum, the danger of death suspends the obligation of the Sabbath. But, supposing the Jews might be ready to take offence at what they would regard as a violation of that holy institution, it is not likely that the disciples could incur any hazard in then making their escape, when it is considered that the confusion and distress arising from the siege of the city would give their enemies neither leisure nor inclination to think of the matter. And although at the moment the disciples might imagine that he referred to the Jewish Sabbath, in the same manner as they imagined, when he spoke of raising up the temple in three days, that he spoke of the Temple of Jerusalem; yet long before the event took place, they would be perfectly acquainted with the specific day to which he alluded, just as after his resurrection they understood that by the temple he meant the temple of his body.

Once more, the same conclusion may be drawn from these words of the Apostle James: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* In this declaration he guards the Jewish converts, to whom he wrote, against the opinion of their unbeliev-

* James ii. 10.

ing brethren, who thought they could recommend themselves to the favour of God by a strict and habitual observance of some one of its precepts, even though they violated all the rest—an opinion in which probably originated the question put to our Lord by the lawyer in the Gospel, "Master, which is the great commandment of the law?"* That opinion the Apostle reprobates in the strongest and most unequivocal language; inasmuch as to disregard any of the divine injunctions is to pour contempt on the authority of the Sovereign Legislator, by which the whole are equally sanctioned,—and to manifest a spirit of opposition to his government, which would lead to transgression in every shape, as often as passion or convenience might dictate.

But to what law does the Apostle here allude? The answer is evident from the context, where he furnishes instances and illustrations of his meaning. There he speaks of "the royal law" of brotherly love, which may be so termed from its suitableness to the kingly character of the Christian; and of "the law of liberty," which may be thus designated in contradistinction to the ceremonial institutions which were called

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* Matt. xxii. 36.

"the yoke of bondage."* He argues, "He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, and yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." Nay, farther, he points to that law, by the works of which faith is "made perfect," or declared to be genuine—a fact which could not be predicated of the Jewish ritual, the more especially, as long before this that ritual was abolished. He must, therefore, refer to that moral code which the Almighty delivered on Mount Sinai, and inscribed with his own finger on two tables of stone; and as the law of the Sabbath was an article of that code, the observance of it, as well as of all the other precepts, is here enforced on professing Christians to the end of time.

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* Gal. v. 1.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE REASONS AND EVIDENCE FOR THE CHANGE OF THE SABBATH FROM THE LAST TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

MISTAKEN views have not unfrequently been entertained of this sacred institution; and from these conclusions have been drawn, by no means sanctioned by a just and consistent interpretation of the inspired records. Some have asserted, that the Sabbath is moral, in that sense of the term which implies immutability, as to the particular day on which it was kept by the Jews; and others have as strenuously insisted that it was designed to serve merely a temporary purpose, and that accordingly its morality and obligation ceased when the Jewish ritual was abolished at the death of Christ. Now, it has been shewn, that neither of these allegations is true, or that both are alike gratuitous and unfounded.

The Sabbath may be considered under two aspects, that is, either in its substantial meaning,

or in its relation to the Mosaic economy. *First*, In regard to its substance, apart from the circumstances which at different periods may have determined its application, it simply signifies the appropriation of one day in seven to the service of God,—a duty arising from its original institution, and, as we have already seen, binding on all men to whom it is known, in every subsequent age of the world. And, *Secondly*, In its relation to the Mosaic economy, under which it was renewed and solemnly promulgated, it was, in addition to the reason assigned for it at the close of creation, appointed as a memorial of the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage, and ordered to be celebrated by them on the day which corresponds with our Saturday, and which they continued to keep during their polity as a church and a nation. But the particular day which they observed as their Sabbath is not obligatory on Christians, because it was abolished along with the ceremonial, in which it was incorporated. This is sufficiently clear from several passages of the New Testament Scriptures, and, especially, from the second chapter and sixteenth verse of the epistle to the Colossians: "Let no man therefore judge you," says the Apostle, "in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day,

or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ."

But though, in reference to the Mosaic economy, the Jewish Sabbath be not binding on Christians, yet the precept to consecrate to the Lord one day in seven, imposes an universal and perpetual obligation. And it is worthy of remark, that the fourth commandment, which contains the law of this institution, does not allude to any one specific day of the week, as exclusively intended for that sacred rest, but merely points out the proportion of time, which we are bound to devote to the immediate service of God.—While it enjoins us to "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy," it does not tell us which day of the seven we are thus to sanctify. It merely calls upon us, after *six* days given to our ordinary avocations, to set apart a *seventh* for the Lord, without saying one word as to what epoch we are to refer the commencement of the series. The precise season of the observance of the Sabbath then, is any day which God, in the wisdom of his counsels, may have appointed, or may afterwards appoint, for that important purpose.

Now, in respect to the Jews, that day was fixed before in the wilderness of Sin; and accord-

ingly, the fourth commandment enforced its duties upon them as a matter of moral and indispensable obligation as long as their national polity should continue. But if that commandment had a *retrospective*, it has also a *prospective* allusion, and bears with equal authority on the sanctification of the Christian Sabbath, the grand weekly festival of the New Testament Church. Thus, the fourth precept of the Decalogue is properly observed on the *Christian* as well as on the *Jewish* scheme; in as much as by the former there is also a day of rest, after six days allotted for worldly employment.

Having made these preliminary observations, we shall now consider, in the *first* place, the Reasons; and, in the *second* place, the Evidence, for the change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week.

SECTION I.

The Reasons for the Change of the Sabbath.

THE grounds of this change are of endearing importance to the Christian; because on them he founds those prospects of future eternal felicity,

which support and gladden him amid the multiplied afflictions and trials to which he is exposed in the pilgrimage of life.

I. One reason then is, that on the *first* day of the week our blessed Lord rose from the dead, and evinced the accomplishment of our redemption.

Although he was from all eternity "in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God," yet such was his generous condescension, that for our sakes he assumed our nature and submitted to the death of the cross.—But his humiliation did not terminate till his resurrection from the dishonours of the tomb. By this glorious event he shewed that the demands of justice were fully satisfied,—that the great work of man's salvation, which he had undertaken, was completed,—and that heaven and eternal life were purchased and secured for all his faithful followers. Hence it is, that to his triumph over the powers of darkness and the grave, the sacred writers appeal with the greatest confidence, since they speak of it as an incontestable proof of the efficacy and acceptance of that atonement which he made for our sins. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our

justification ;"* and thus being raised, he entered into his rest, and " ceased from his own works, as God did from his."† And if the day on which the great Creator finished the system of nature was sanctified or set apart for sacred purposes, so by analogy ought the day on which the divine Redeemer finished the spiritual system, to be consecrated for the same end.

The work of redemption is dignified in Scripture with the name of a new creation; in as much as every genuine Christian is said to be " a new creature; old things being past away, and all things become new."‡ And this is a creation in which the wisdom, and power, and goodness of God are no less eminently conspicuous than in the production of the material world; and which the inspired records celebrate in the highest strains of eulogy, as diffusing a radiance and a glory over the divine perfections. " Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel."§

If we admire the wisdom which, in the first

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* Rom. iv. 25. † Heb. iv. 10. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 17.
§ Isaiah xliv. 23.

creation, planned that perfect and beautiful system, and adopted the most direct and efficacious means for arriving at its objects, we cannot fail to admire also *that* wisdom which contrived the glorious scheme of redemption, and fixed upon the most appropriate measures for surmounting the numerous obstacles which opposed its completion, and for attaining infallibly the end proposed. If we venerate the power which produced the universe out of nothing, and which established the laws for regulating its movements, we have no less reason to venerate *that* power which, in the moral world, brought light out of darkness, and order out of confusion, and which, notwithstanding the intervening difficulties resulting from the enmity of the devil, the lusts of the flesh, and the policy of the world, raised up a fair and incomparable structure, implying the counteraction and remedy of every evil, and bearing in the brightest characters, "Glory to God in the highest." And if we adore the goodness which diffuses happiness in such abundance throughout the earth, supplying every thing necessary for the accommodation and comfort of animal and intelligent beings, and adapting their capacities of enjoyment to the objects around them, we cannot but adore *that* goodness which renovates the soul, rescues man from the ruins of

the fall, and restores him to the favour and privileges which he had lost. In short, in the work of redemption, all the attributes of Deity shine with a lustre which was never surpassed, or even equalled, by any previous manifestation. And since it was befitting to appoint a day to commemorate the accomplishment of creation, and to meditate on the perfections and greatness of God, it must be expedient and right that the day which witnessed the finishing of a plan so truly magnificent, should be kept in the most devout and grateful remembrance by all who name the name of Christ, and rejoice in him as "the Lord their righteousness."

The call, besides, to observe the day of the Redeemer's resurrection, as the Christian Sabbath, is rendered the more imperious by our deeper interest in the work, which by that event he declared to be perfected. Although nature offers to our view every thing to invite our attentive consideration,—to excite our admiration of the perfections and goodness of its great Author, and to draw forth our feelings into acts of gratitude and praise; yet how much more powerful is the claim which redemption prefers from the transcendant blessings which it bestows? Here we not only see all the attributes of God in harmonious co-operation, but we behold them ex-

erted for the promotion of our eternal welfare. The enjoyments which we derive from the *material* world are commensurate only with our mortal career; whereas those which the new *spiritual* creation supplies, extend beyond the grave, and stretch throughout a boundless duration. Yes, by this gracious and condescending achievement, that moral distemper which threatened to efface the image of God from the earth, and to involve us in misery and ruin, is arrested in its progress. We are presented with all that can render existence a blessing,—we are raised from the depth and pollution of sin, to the height and beauty of holiness,—we are introduced into the presence of God, and crowned with immortal felicity. If therefore it was reasonable that a day regularly returning, should be consecrated for commemorating the material creation, it must also be reasonable that the new creation, which no less conspicuously displays the divine perfections, should be distinguished by a similar memorial. Indeed these two works are but successive developments of the same great plan, which had been formed in the counsels of eternity; and the grander and more complete its evolution, the more we are excited to wonder, and admiration, and praise.

Nay, I may venture a step farther, and maintain that the redemption of the world was a work

of greater effort and expense, if I may use the expression, than even its original production out of nothing. For in the accomplishment of the latter, all that was necessary was for God to " speak the word, and it was done,"—and to " command, and it stood fast."* But the former could not be effected, except by the humiliation, and sufferings, and death of his own eternal Son. Surely then that day which first witnessed the completion of our deliverance from never-ending destruction, should be observed by us as a grand commemorative solemnity; no less than that which first smiled on the finished system of nature, was by those of our race who lived previously to the introduction of the Christian dispensation. And when we consider that the Jewish Sabbath was abrogated by the death of Christ, it follows that the day on which our Lord rose from the dead should be substituted in its place, and hallowed to the glory of his name. Nor by such a substitution is the reason assigned for the original appointment of the Sabbatic institution lost sight of, or the law of the fourth commandment transgressed; for after six days allowed for labour, there is still one reserved for sa-

* Psalms xxxiii. 9.

cred rest. Hence, by observing the *first* instead of the last day of the week, we celebrate both the creation and the redemption of the world. But,

II. As the day which completed the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt, was fixed on as their Sabbath; so the day which evinced our deliverance from worse than Egyptian bondage, should, on the same principle, be kept as a memorial of that event. Between these two deliverances there is a close and striking analogy, in as much as the one was typical of the other. And surely, if the type was thus commemorated, the antitype deserves to be equally so,—or if a temporal salvation, which concerned comparatively few of the human race, was honoured with a weekly festival, the spiritual and eternal salvation not of *one* nation merely, but of people of all countries, kindreds, and tongues, is a sufficient reason for a similar observance.

Here it may be remarked, as I have hinted before, that it is altogether uncertain whether the Jewish Sabbath was the *seventh* day in a regular series from that which God blessed and sanctified, when he rested from the works of his hands. Nay, it is even probable that, in consecutive order, it was the *sixth*, and not the seventh, which was designated by the falling of manna in

the desert, and which the Jews afterwards kept, as the stated season devoted to God. For we learn from their interesting history, that on the fifteenth of the second month after their departure from Egypt, they came into the wilderness of Sin; and that the twenty-second of the same month they were ordered to celebrate as their Sabbath. Now, it is obvious, if the twenty-second was the day of sacred rest pointed out to them by the institution at the close of creation; so, of course, was the preceding fifteenth. But instead of resting on the fifteenth, they performed, by the direction of Heaven, a long and wearisome journey, which, it is likely, they would not have been permitted to do, had it been the day before appointed for that solemnity.*

But allowing it cannot be proved, that the day of the Sabbath was changed in the wilderness; neither, on the other hand, can it be proved, although it is generally taken for granted, that it was the seventh in order from the creation. Yet, however this may be, the first day on which they rested after their escape from the hands of their oppressors, was the day which, in its regular return, they were commanded to consecrate in future to the service of their redeeming God. Ac-

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* Note G.

cordingly, we find that their exodus out of Egypt was assigned as a reason for the enforcement of the duties which that sacred institution implies. And certainly, if it was proper that the Jews should devote to the Lord the day which completed their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, it must be equally, nay, still more becoming, that Christians should commemorate and sanctify the day which completed their redemption from an infinitely greater thraldom—the thraldom of sin and of eternal misery. But,

III. In the *last* place, As every part of the instituted worship of God, under the New Testament economy, has a direct reference to Christ, so should also the day on which that worship is publicly performed. Jesus is the great object in which all our hopes for futurity centre; and the whole of our religious and devotional services in the sanctuary must have a relation to him. This is what we are taught by the gospel in the plainest and most unequivocal terms: and the lesson thus afforded must uniformly regulate the practice of all who approach their Creator with acceptance. When we are introduced within the pale of the Christian church, and admitted to its external privileges, we are baptized in the name of Christ. When we partake of his holy supper,

and raise the sacred symbols of his broken body and shed blood in our hands, we commemorate that condescension and love which led him to lay down his life for the redemption of perishing sinners. When we expound the holy Scriptures, and propose motives to duty, we testify of Jesus, in whom all the plans of providence have their completion; and urge the obligations under which his followers are laid to live to his honour and glory. And when we address our prayers to Heaven for the blessings of which we stand in need, as weak and imperfect creatures, we plead the merits of Christ, and rest our expectations on the divine promises through his mediation.

Thus every department of our religious duties, in the house of God, has a direct allusion to Him who came in the name of the Lord to save us. It is he who furnishes the only inducement which sinners can have for the performance of these duties, and who gives life, and efficacy, and meaning to what would otherwise be destitute of every element of faith, and love, and hope, and devotion. And if this be the case, Why should not the day also, on which we are commanded to assemble together for this important purpose, have an immediate and specific reference to our Redeemer, on whom all that is dear to us in time and in eternity depends? Since, then, the day

of the Jewish Sabbath has been abolished, the day on which our Lord rose from the dead, and evinced the accomplishment of our salvation, ought to be appropriated to sacred rest.

SECTION II.

On the Evidence for the Change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week.

We do not find that this change was introduced by any express recorded command. Yet, as we know not all that Christ taught his Disciples, either in his private conferences with them previously to his death, or during the forty days which intervened between his resurrection from the grave and his ascension into heaven, when he spoke "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," it was probably one of the subjects to which these conferences and instructions referred. But however this may be, we have the clearest and most unequivocal proof that such an alteration was authoritatively made. It is manifest,

I. From the practice of the Apostles and the first Christians.

In the gospel history, we are told, that as soon as the Disciples had received intelligence of their Lord's resurrection, they met together in Jerusalem; and very likely they did so, in compliance with some intimation given to them before his death, that the day on which he should rise again should be kept, on every revolution of the hebdomadal cycle, as a season devoted to the immediate service of God. While they were thus assembled, and "the doors of the house shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you." Eight days after, inclusively, he appeared to them in the same manner, a second time, saluting them in the very terms he had done before;* and, doubtless, he continued to grace, with his personal presence, their religious assemblies, every succeeding first day of the week during his abode upon earth, though it was not the design of the inspired historian to mention every instance of this which occurred. It is never said that he met with them on any other day of the week; and what probable reason can be assigned for marking out the *First* with so decided a preference, but that some emphatic and important meaning

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* John xx. 19. 26.

is attached to that circumstance? The only legitimate conclusion to be drawn from the consideration is, that it was the season now set apart for devotional purposes, and that, in thus employing it, Christians in all subsequent ages may especially look for the countenance and blessing of the divine Redeemer.

We are again told, that "when the day of Pentecost was fully come," the Apostles, with many brethren, "were all with one accord in one place."* Now, as the Passover that year happened on the Sabbath,† the feast of Pentecost, which was celebrated fifty days after it, fell on the first day of the week. On that day the disciples, to the number of a hundred and twenty, assembled together, which, as it would seem, was already their regular practice, in honour of their Master's resurrection, and perhaps, too, in obedience to his instructions. That this was not an accidental meeting, is evident from the language of the sacred historian, who informs us that they came together "ὁμαθυμαδον, with one accord," or with mutual understanding and unanimous affection, for the worship of God. While thus convened separately from the Jews, who were then observing in the temple,

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* Acts ii. 1. † John xix. 31.

their great national solemnity, the divine benediction was most signally vouchsafed to them. All present were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance; and, by a sermon which the Apostle Peter delivered on the occasion, three thousand souls were converted to the Christian faith.* Such were the miraculous gifts, and the corresponding success, with which Heaven honoured the Sabbatic observance of the first day of the week. And, in all time coming, on the consecration of that day to religious services, the blessing of God may still be expected, though not in the same marvellous manner as we have just described.

It is also recorded, that "upon the first day of the week,† when the disciples," at Troas, "came together to break bread," or to partake of the Holy Supper, "Paul preached unto them"‡—a statement which bears, in the very terms of its conveyance, that it was now their regular and established custom to meet on that day for devotional purposes. They did not convene, because he had expressed a desire to address them at that particular time; but he embraced the opportunity which the stated return

* Acts ii. 41. † Note H. ‡ Acts xx. 7.

of their weekly festival afforded him, to deliver to them important Christian instruction. Had not this been the case, there were other days on which his benevolent object might have been accomplished, as we are informed in the preceding context, that he remained a week at Troas. Indeed, that they came together in their ordinary course, is evident from the consideration that their motive was "to break bread,"—an expression which, by a figure called a synecdoche, denotes the whole of divine worship. Now, though it is probable, from the Apostle's continuing *seven* days at Troas, that he met with them privately in the intervening space; yet the Holy Spirit, who dictated the history, passes over this circumstance in silence, and singles out, by exclusive reference, the *first* day of the week. And what can be meant by the frequent and specific mention of that day in connexion with public assemblies, but that it was the season which was set apart and observed as the sacred rest, and on which the social duties of religion were performed?

Again, the language of the same Apostle to the Corinthians, furnishes a proof no less decisive on the question. "Upon the first day of the week," says he, "let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be

no gatherings when I come."* The object here was to make a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem; and no reason can be given, more than in the places already mentioned, why the first day of the week should be pointed out in preference to any other for this purpose, but that on that day the followers of Jesus were, by divine warrant, in the habit of meeting together for the worship of God. Indeed this is evident from the original expression, κατὰ μίαν σαββάτων, which should be translated "every first day of the week;" and, besides, on any other ground, we cannot suppose that the inspired Apostle would have imposed upon the churches such a circumstance. Works of charity and mercy are quite consistent with the sanctification of the Sabbath: and from the delightful recollections which that sacred rest suggests to the pious mind, the strongest motives are then presented for the discharge of these duties. As by the resurrection of Christ on that day, the Corinthians, in common with other Christians, were begotten again to a lively hope,—the hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and fading not away;"† so on every opportunity which its stated return afforded them of assem-

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* 1 Corinth. xvi. 2. † 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

bling in his name, gratitude to him would come in aid of their sense of duty, and prompt them to extend their beneficence to his indigent disciples. Hence they were enjoined, as they entered the house of God, to put each into the treasury which was there kept, what they could spare of the earnings of the preceding week.

The order which the Apostle thus gave to the church of Corinth, he had previously given to the churches of Galatia. This shews, and shews decisively, not only the extent of the practice of convening for public worship on the day signalized by the resurrection of Christ, but also the high authority by which the keeping of that day holy was recommended and enforced. And it is remarkable, that though that Apostle, in his epistle to the Galatians, condemned the observance of "days, and months, and times, and years,"* he yet inculcated upon them the consecration of the first day of every week to the solemn service of God. It is impossible to account for this apparent inconsistency, but on the principle that all the religious seasons peculiar to the Jews, as a part of their ritual, were abolished at the death of Christ; and that the only season which was to

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* Gal. iv. 10.

be celebrated in place of these, as the grand New Testament festival, was the day on which he rose from the dead, and thus evinced the accomplishment of man's redemption.

Now, this general practice, begun and sanctioned by the Apostles, amounts to a divine appointment of the first day of the week as the New Testament Sabbath. For, although we do not find any definite or recorded precept of our Lord for that appointment, yet if it be admitted that these Apostles were under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, their determinations, in this case, are equal to a mandate of Heaven. Whatever they approved of in religious matters, either by their countenance, their doctrine, or their example, carries with it an emphasis and a force which none, who takes the statements of Scripture for the rule of his faith and conduct, can possibly resist. This consideration would alone be sufficient to establish the divine institution and moral obligation of the Lord's day, as the season of sacred rest, supposing there was no collateral proof that they were influenced in all their arrangements in the church by the personal injunctions of their Lord and Master. But, in the commission which he delivered to them immediately before he left the earth, there is such a proof in these words: "—teaching all nations

to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."* Surely then we cannot for a moment imagine, that they were unfaithful to this solemn charge; or that, in the character of accredited ambassadors, they acted contrary to the instructions they had received. They would unquestionably have done so, had they, without any warrant, presumed to change an ordinance of God. Yet, so confident was Paul of his fidelity to the trust committed to him, that he says to the Thessalonians, "Ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus;"† and to the Corinthians, "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."‡ It is therefore evident, that the practice of the churches must be traced to the doctrines of the Apostles, and the doctrines of the Apostles to the instructions of Christ.

Still it may be asked, Why is there no explicit recorded injunction concerning a subject of so much importance? The truth is, that as the old Sabbath was abrogated at the death of Christ, and as the law of the Fourth Commandment is

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* Matt. xxviii. 20. † 1 Thess. iv. 2. ‡ 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

of perpetual obligation, the consecration of one day in seven, to the exclusive service of God, is binding, to the end of time, upon all to whom it is known. Hence there was no direct necessity for any specific additional announcement regarding that duty. No day could be more appropriate for the New Sabbatic institution, than that on which Jesus rose from the dead, and thus declared the work of our redemption accomplished; and his followers would see at once the propriety of observing that day as the season of sacred rest.

Besides, our Lord, and after him his Apostles, were anxious to avoid giving offence to the Jews, and throwing any obstacle in the way of their conversion to the Christian faith. Considering the long-cherished and powerful prepossessions of that people, in favour of the peculiarities of their own religious system, there would have been but little prospect of success in gaining their attention to the overtures of the gospel, had it been openly and avowedly maintained at first, that the very day on which their fathers worshipped was, under this dispensation, abolished to make room for another. It was therefore more expedient, as it certainly argued a greater degree of wisdom to give, for some time, little prominence to this subject, and rather to introduce it gradually among them, as they were

prepared, by their progress in knowledge, to welcome it with a more cordial reception.

Accordingly we find, that the Apostles frequently met with the Jews in their synagogues on the day of their Sabbath. And, though by doing so they did not mean to assert the obligation of that day, which they knew to be no longer binding, yet they embraced the favourable opportunity which it afforded of expounding to them the Scriptures, and of bringing them over to the Christian faith. They went among them as they found them assembled for the performance of devotional duties, and ready to listen to the inculcation of religious truth; whereas, had these heralds of Christianity denounced the seventh day of the week, and all at once told them that the first was substituted in its place, they should have awakened their prejudices, and impeded the cause which they laboured to promote. And here we have a practical illustration of their own principle of becoming "all things to all men, that they might, by all means, save some."*

II. As another evidence for the authoritative change of the Sabbath from the last to the first

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* 1 Cor. ix. 22.

day of the week, we may appeal to the declaration of the Apostle John in the isle of Patmos, when he says, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day."

To see the bearing of this declaration on the subject before us, let us advert to the terms in which it was made, and the object which it was intended to serve. The expression, "the Lord's day," obviously designates a certain portion of time distinguished from all others, and devoted to him as his peculiar property. In one sense indeed, every day is his; for it is he who formed the light and created the darkness, or who produced the system of nature, and established the laws by which its movements are regulated. But, in its connexion with the passage in which it occurs, the day thus denominated must have a more particular and emphatic meaning, before we can attach to it any specific or tangible idea. It is called "the Lord's day," because it was appointed by him, the Lord of the Sabbath, for his immediate service; just as the Eucharist is styled "the Lord's Supper," from its being instituted by him, to commemorate his sufferings and death—or the righteous, "the Lord's people," in consequence of their being chosen by

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* Rev. i. 10.

him, supported by his grace, and devoted to the promotion of his glory and honour.

The Apostle, let it be observed, in saying he was "in the spirit on the Lord's day," meant to specify the time when, through a divine communication, he received the visions which he afterwards relates. And how could the churches to which he addressed them have comprehended that meaning, unless he had used a designation with which they were familiarly acquainted? He could not here allude to the Jewish Sabbath; for, besides the fact of that festival's being long before abolished, it is not so much as once mentioned under that precise denomination, either in the orignal Hebrew, or in the translation of the *Seventy*. Nor is there any day particularized in the New Testament to which he could possibly refer, but the first day of the week, consecrated by our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and prophesied of by the psalmist many centuries preceding, as "the day which the Lord hath made."* Indeed, Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, about eleven or twelve years after the Apocalypse was written, styles it, in his epistle to the Magnesians, ἡ κυριακὴ, that is, the Lord's day, ἡμερα being understood. He also uses the same

* Psalm cxviii. 24.

expression in his epistle to the Trallians; and many others of the Christian fathers point it out by a similar phraseology.

In short, no sufficient reason can be assigned why the Apostle John should have mentioned "the Lord's day" as the date of his visions, but that the first day of the week was now set apart for divine worship, and generally recognised by that title in the Christian church. His object was to intimate the particular season on which he received his revelations in Patmos; and he employed this language as a distinguishing appellation, well known to those to whom he dedicated his book. Here, then, we have a proof that the day of Christ's triumphant resurrection from the grave has, on every revolution of the hebdomadal cycle, been kept as the sacred rest ever since the event which it commemorates took place. But this will more fully appear when we consider,

III. Lastly, The testimony of ancient uninspired writers, as an accessory evidence for the authority of the change in question.

From the Apostolic age, down to the present time, it has been the universal practice of the Christian church to celebrate the day on which Jesus rose from the dead, as the solemn season of

public devotion. Of this practice the younger Pliny speaks in no ambiguous terms, in his letter to the emperor Trajan, who assumed the purple the same year on which the Apostle John died. His words are these: "They," the Christians, "were in the habit of meeting together on a stated day, before light, and of singing a hymn to Christ, as to God." But the writings of the Christian fathers are still more pointed and decisive on this subject. Barnabas, who was contemporary with the Apostles, says, "We keep the eighth day with gladness, on which Jesus rose from the dead;" meaning the day after the Jewish Sabbath, which was observed on the seventh of the week. Ignatius, who was a disciple of the Apostle John, thus exhorts in his epistle to the Magnesians: "Let every lover of Christ celebrate the Lord's day, which is the queen and chief of all days." In his Apology for the Christians to the emperor Antoninus, Justin Martyr, who suffered in 163, makes this statement: "On the day called Sunday,* all who live in the town and country assemble together in some place, where the records of the Apostles, and the writings of the Prophets, as

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* Note I.

much as is appointed, are read to us. The reader having done, the priest or prelate exhorts us to imitate the things which are there repeated; then, standing up together, we offer our prayers to the Lord; and after this, there are delivered to each of us bread and wine, with water." According to Eusebius, Dionysius of Corinth remarks, in his epistle to Soter, bishop of Rome, towards the end of the same century, "To-day we kept the Lord's day, that day which is holy, when we read your epistle, which we always read for our instruction." Clement of Alexandria, who flourished about the year 190, declares, in the seventh book of his *Stromata*, "He that orders his life according to the commands of the gospel, observes the Lord's day, when he casts away every evil thought, and doing things with knowledge and understanding, glorifies the Lord in his resurrection." The twenty-ninth canon of the council which met at Laodicea, in the fourth century, determines that, "Instead of Judaizing and resting on the Sabbath, Christians ought to work on that day; but, preferring to it the Lord's day, they ought, as far as possible, to rest on it, as becometh Christians." And Athanasius, in the same century, has these words:— "The Sabbath was the end of the first creation; but the Lord's day is the beginning of the second

creation, in which he renewed the old man. As, therefore, he commanded the Sabbath to be kept in memory of the first creation, so we honour the Lord's day, in memory of the beginning of the second creation."

These testimonies, and many more of a similar nature, which it were easy to produce, shew that it was the practice of the early Christians to keep the first day of the week as their Sabbatic rest. And how could this practice have been introduced and maintained, had not Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, appointed it, either by his own personal instructions, or by authority delegated to his Apostles? The consideration that, during the four first centuries, it was universally observed in the church, and that it has continued without interruption to the present time, is a satisfying proof of the divine institution of the Christian Sabbath, and of its binding power to the latest ages of the world.

Should any think that the ordinance originated in mere ecclesiastical appointment, I would ask at what time, and with what church, did it originate? Was it in the apostolic age, or subsequently to that period? There are just two terms in the alternative; the one or other of which must be adopted as the date of the appointment. If the *former* be admitted, then the Apos-

tles, who were the builders and teachers of the Christian church, must have introduced and sanctioned the practice; and accordingly, as they acted under the inspiration and commission of Heaven, that practice must bear upon it the stamp and authority of a divine command. But if the *latter* be fixed on, the decision is contrary to all probability, not to mention the proof from scripture, and the testimony of early uninspired writers, which have been already adduced. For it is by no means likely, that the primitive Christians would have determined in a matter of such moment, without the countenance and support of the Apostles whom they professed to revere, and from whom they received their religious instruction. Besides, what church first set the example of celebrating the Lord's day with Sabbatic honours, if not that which consisted of his immediate followers? No other can be pointed out; and therefore we are bound to conclude that the appropriation of that day to sacred purposes rests on a mandate which no creature is at liberty to dispute.

Although during the second and third centuries a controversy was keenly agitated between the eastern and western churches concerning the time of celebrating paschal day, or the anniversary of Christ's meritorious death,—the *former*

contending for the *fourteenth* of the first Jewish month, when that people kept their passover,—and the latter for the *first* day of the week, when the Redeemer's triumphant resurrection from the grave was commemorated; yet amid these violent contentions they never once called in question the divine institution and authority of the Lord's day. On that day they all agreed to suspend their worldly avocations, to assemble for public worship, and to discharge the domestic and secret duties of religion. As far as ecclesiastical history informs us, not one heretic arose to oppugn the practice; and this evinces the decided sentiments of the ancient Christians upon the subject,—sentiments which they must have unquestionably imbibed from the Apostles themselves, and handed down to succeeding generations.

It is indeed true, that for a certain period the early Christians in some places met on the seventh day of the week; but then they did not keep it with so much regard and strictness as they did the first day, in as much as they considered themselves at liberty to work on the former, as soon as the services of the sanctuary were over. The only reason they had, if it be a reason which can vindicate their conduct, for observing the Jewish in addition to the Christian Sabbath, was, as we stated before, the ground of ex-

pediency, that, by accommodating themselves in a certain degree to the prejudices of the Jews, they might have a fitter opportunity for converting them to the faith of the Gospel. And that in this they had no respect to the old law, is evident from the fact, that among the errors for which the Ebionites were condemned by the church, was that of their insisting on the duty of celebrating both days with equal honours.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SABBATH OUGHT TO BE OBSERVED

THIS branch of the subject is of deep importance to all who profess the Christian name—who consult the best interests of society around them—and who study the prosperity and welfare of their own immortal souls. And as it opens up a wide field of remark, and bears with so full an aspect on practical life, it will be proper here to enter into more lengthened detail.

The duties, to which we are called on this sacred festival, are generally pointed out by the very terms of the institution, while they are amplified and illustrated by frequent allusions to them in the Old Testament Scriptures. The word Sabbath signifies *rest*; and the actions expressed by blessing and sanctifying that rest explicitly represent to us its distinctive nature. It was before noticed, that when God blessed the

seventh day, he pronounced it a season of spiritual rejoicing to his intelligent offspring, and that when he sanctified it, he set it apart from all secular purposes, and consecrated it to his own immediate service,—a truth which is farther evinced by the preamble to the fourth commandment, where he peremptorily enjoins us to "Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy." There can therefore be no misapprehension as to the nature and intendment of the ordinance in question. Yet, as its importance requires that its objects be stated in a clear and systematic form, it is proposed, with this view, to consider in their order,—the evils to be avoided; the duties to be performed; and the exceptions, commonly denominated works of piety, necessity, and mercy.

It may not, however, be improper, before proceeding to the illustration of these topics, here to premise, in a distinct section, some general remarks, by way of introduction to the subject.

SECTION I.

On the duty of Preparation for the Sabbath.

Such is the constitution of the human mind, that it cannot pass, with any advantage, by too sud-

den a transition from worldly cares and amusements to the concerns and pleasures of religion. To promote our spiritual interests, as well as to render an acceptable service to God, the attention must be wholly abstracted from the things of time, and devoted to those of eternity. Any impression which could otherwise be made, would have no more effect in checking the waywardness of our hearts and the irregularities of our conduct, than the shadow of a cloud sweeping across the field in retarding the labour of the husbandman.

It is therefore obvious, that to keep the Sabbath so as to derive from it all the benefits which it is fitted to impart, we must leave off our ordinary avocations at a seasonable hour, on the night before. Sensible of the propriety of such an arrangement, the Jews laid aside all work at *three* in the afternoon of the day preceding; which, from that circumstance, was called by them the *Sabbath Eve*, and by the Evangelists the παρασκευη, or *preparation day*.* And though we are not to follow the general example of that people, yet their practice, in the respect now mentioned, which is founded in reason and recom-

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* Mark xv. 42.

mended by its happy results, is well worthy of our constant imitation. For, to carry our secularities to the very point where the sacred rest commences, argues affections wedded to the vanities of this fleeting scene, and proportionably callous to all that is beyond it.

To be prepared for the Sabbath, we should devote part of the Saturday evening to meditation on the nature and objects of that holy institution. If, on that day, we are called to the more immediate service of God, it is requisite that we should previously consider the extent and quality of the obedience which he demands. If, on that day, we are especially invited to communion with the Father of our spirits, we should endeavour, beforehand, to have our minds in a proper frame for so solemn an approach to him. Or, if on that day we are furnished with an opportunity of attending exclusively to the things which belong to our everlasting peace, we should, ere it arrives, think of our wants and our weaknesses, our mercies and our grounds of gratitude, that we may enter with suitable views and feelings on the discharge of its sacred duties. In this way, our observance of it will be crowned with advantage and success.

Indeed the very injunction, "Remember the Sabbath," clearly implies that we should antici-

pate its return. Acting on this injunction, we must study to have our temporal affairs timeously despatched on the Saturday night; so that, on the sacred rest, our attention may not be distracted, nor our devotions hindered, by the intrusion of worldly thoughts. Religion is not a matter which consists merely of outward ceremony; it is a spiritual service, for the performance of which, the understanding and the heart are essentially necessary. And, unless the mind be seasonably withdrawn from the common cares and recreations of life, it is altogether impossible that we can either yield a becoming homage to God, or make any desirable progress in the knowledge, and love, and practice of holiness.

Now, if these remarks be well-founded, what shall we say of those who frequent the ball-room or the theatre on the Saturday evening,—or who go to the tavern, or accept of invitations to supper in private families, where the intoxicating liquor is circulated, and the Bacchanalian song kept up, till they encroach on the morning of that day which God has sanctified, and which his Eternal Son also has consecrated by his resurrection from the dead? In no other light can they be viewed but as "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." For if Christian principle held a predominant sway in their hearts,—if they were

anxious to do all to the glory of their Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer,—or if they felt any serious concern about the prosperity and welfare of their immortal souls, they would enter into no engagements which, by necessary consequence, would operate as a damper on the discharge of their Sabbatic devotions.

It is perfectly certain, that when our minds are filled with recent impressions, received in places of frivolous amusement, we not only conceive an aversion to the offices of piety, but are actually unable to yield that attention to them, which their nature and importance require. And it is no less evident, that when we sit at the festive board till a late hour on the Saturday night, or it may be, infringe on the Sabbath, we unfit ourselves, by our subsequent listlessness and languor, for the duties of that sacred institution. O let us then consider our eternal interests,—let us remember our final responsibility to God,—and let us eagerly improve every opportunity afforded us for growing in grace, and in meetness for the heavenly inheritance!

SECTION II.

On the evils to be abstained from on the Sabbatic Solemnity.

THE Sabbath was instituted, not only as a memorial of creation and redemption, but also as a symbol of that spiritual rest reserved in Heaven for the people of God; and as a season peculiarly fitted for cherishing those religious feelings, and for cultivating those principles of holiness, without which the inheritance of the saints in light can never be enjoyed. Hence it is evident, that whatever is inconsistent with these great purposes, must be avoided as directly hostile to our eternal interests.

ARTICLE FIRST.

Every thing sinful in itself is to be abstained from on the Sabbath.

THE immutable law of righteousness, which God has revealed for the regulation of our conduct, can never be violated without incurring the charge of guilt and the danger of disobedience. At all times, and in all circumstances, we must preserve

unbroken that allegiance which we owe to our Creator, Benefactor, and Redeemer ; for he demands of us, as his unalienable prerogative, and our invariable duty, the gratitude of our hearts the tribute of our praise, and the homage of our obedience. The highest rank cannot warrant the profanation of his name, or a disregard of his requirements,—the most necessitous condition cannot justify the abstraction of our neighbour's property,—the most inveterate habits, or the most powerful temptations, cannot furnish an excuse for intemperance, sensuality, or uncleanness.

The very nature of God, and the ends of his moral government, render holiness indispensably necessary. His injunctions, accordingly, which are express and authoritative, admit of no exemption in favour of any particular cases—allow of no compromise between his service and the service of Satan. Every day—every hour—every moment of our lives, the infringement of his statutes is an act of rebellion and of crime, insulting to his majesty, revolting to his purity, and exposing to his retributive justice. But still, though sin be an evil which God cannot behold without abhorrence, yet it is not unfrequently aggravated by the circumstances in which it is committed. For instance, to swear and to steal are direct transgressions of the first and second

table of the law; but the positive quantity of wickedness attaching to these transgressions is increased when done on the season of sacred rest; because, in this case, they involve, in addition to a breach of the third and eighth commandments, the violation of the sanctity of that institution. Besides, the tendency of immoralities, on the Lord's day, is to steel the heart against religious impressions,—to extinguish all regard for the authority of Heaven,—and to accelerate our progress in the paths of destruction. The duty, therefore, of abstaining from what is, at any time, unholy, is rendered doubly imperious on that day, by the obligations under which we are laid to devote it entirely and exclusively to the service of God.

This is a consideration of weighty importance, and of great practical utility, in the divine life,—a consideration which should operate as a powerful incentive to our diligence in remembering the Sabbath, so as to guard against the intrusion of every unhallowed thought and emotion, and against the performance of every unrighteous and forbidden deed. Surely, if the guilt of sin be augmented by being committed on that day, it should be our studious and unremitting care, that "Holiness to the Lord" be inscribed on every sentiment we cherish, every word we

utter, and every action we perform. And can we say that such pious and watchful attentions have always distinguished our Sabbatic hours? Can we say that we have never then indulged in impure imaginations,—courted licentious pleasures,—and broken the laws of the Almighty Sovereign? Can we say that we have never "walked in the counsel of the ungodly, stood in the way of sinners, sat in the seat of the scorner," or done aught that the eye of holy Omniscience has seen amiss? Ah! if, in the retrospect, we should attempt to justify our conduct, our "heart would condemn us;" and when we think that "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things," it becomes us to humble ourselves before him, confessing our frequent profanations of his Sabbath, and praying for his sanctifying and disposing grace, that we may be enabled in future to answer the end for which it was appointed.

ARTICLE SECOND.

All worldly business is to be abstained from on the Sabbath.

THE divine statute is express and unequivocal: "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy

work; but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work." Here is the proportion of time which the Creator allows, on the one hand, for the management of our temporal concerns; and which he demands, on the other, for the performance of his own immediate service. Whatever, therefore, is incompatible with this solemn requirement, or tends to frustrate its object, is strictly prohibited; and the prohibition carries with it an authority which no human being, to whom it is known, can with impunity resist. It is impossible to desecrate this holy season, by devoting any part of it to secular pursuits, without robbing God of the homage and obedience which he claims as his unalienable right; and for the withholding of which every individual, when the pilgrimage of life is finished, is accountable at his tribunal.

Cessation from all such employments as are at other times lawful, is an essential element in the devout observance of the weekly festival. And this cessation must continue, not merely during the hours which custom has prescribed for the public worship of God, but, as intimated by the very language in which the injunction is given, during the whole term of a natural day. Here the Divine wisdom is conspicuously displayed;

for had the obligation of the Sabbath been restricted to the services of the sanctuary, or had it commenced with these, and expired as soon as they were over, what would have been the consequence, in respect of our religious and moral improvement? We should then have been more apt than we are even now, to carry secularities with us into the house of God, to damp and extinguish our devotional feelings; and the moment we retired, the nature of the engagements, immediately following, would have speedily erased from the mind any good impression that might have been produced. But as the case stands, we have time *previously* to reflect and solemnize our thoughts, and we have time *afterwards* to meditate on what we have heard, and thus to give it a fixed and settled hold on our memories and our consciences.

Such is the command of Heaven, with its beneficial tendency when duly obeyed; and it were impiety—it were sacrilege, to treat it with neglect. If God has allowed us six days of the week for the promotion of our temporal interests, it cannot certainly be deemed a rigorous exaction that he requires the *seventh* to be entirely devoted to his service. By the most sacred ties, we are bound to suspend our ordinary business on that day, and to consecrate the season wholly

and exclusively to him. What would we think of a servant, who either disobeyed our orders altogether, or who, notwithstanding we commanded him to work ten hours, wrought only three or four? Would we think that in this case he discharged his duty? Would we not rather consider him unfaithful to his trust, and unworthy of our future confidence? And can we suppose, that the great Lord of all will smile upon our conduct, if by our secular pursuits we profane the whole, or even a part, of his holy Sabbath? Let us deliberately weigh his declaration on the subject:—"Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath-day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem: neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers."* "Ye shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people."†

But how lamentable is it to observe, that though we are enjoined by the highest authority

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* Jer. xvii. 21, 22. † Exod. xxxi. 14.

to desist from all worldly occupations on this sacred day, it is frequently polluted by attention to earthly things? In Christian countries, indeed, we see a general cessation from the ordinary labours of the week. Yet there are those who, provided they can veil their conduct from the view of the public, do not scruple to engage in commercial transactions, and to buy and sell, as if the Almighty had not prohibited the practice.—There are those who spend the Lord's day in perusing and answering letters on business—in bringing forward and balancing their books—in arranging and promoting their secular concerns.—And there are those, who not only do all this themselves, but also employ and encourage their clerks and dependants in the same daring outrage on the command of the supreme Jehovah.

It requires little knowledge of Christian casuistry to perceive the profanity of such conduct. For nothing can be more explicit than the declaration,—"The *seventh* day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant." And if, in the face of this declaration, we prefer, on that day, the service of Mammon to the service of the living God; and if, instead of dissuading those with whom we are connected from violat-

ing the sacred rest, we lead them, by our means, to disregard that ordinance, how shall we answer to Heaven for the aggravated iniquity of which we are guilty? O let us resolve the question! "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* And let us seriously think of the awful responsibility we incur, by being instrumental in the eternal ruin of persons, whose salvation it is our duty to do all in our power to promote! Assuredly God does not wink at such presumptuous contempt of his supreme authority; and he has expressly denounced "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man that doeth evil."† O how dreadful must it be to be excluded from that rest which awaits his people in the regions of bliss—to be driven as outcasts from the presence of God—and to be doomed to misery through an everlasting duration!

If we profane the Lord's day, we can make no apology for our conduct which will stand the scrutiny of infinite knowledge. Nor let us imagine that we promote even our secular interests by trampling on that divine institution. For, as God is the sovereign Disposer of all events, with-

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* Mark. viii. 36. † Rom. ii. 8, 9.

out his blessing we can neither prosper in time, nor enjoy happiness in eternity. It becomes us then carefully to ascertain whether we "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy,"—to examine our hearts and to try our ways, as in the sight of that God by whom we must shortly be judged—and to endeavour, for the future, rightly to observe, through his assisting grace, "his commandments, his statutes, and his laws."

ARTICLE THIRD.

All secular pleasures are to be abstained from on the Sabbath.

Besides the ordinary occupations which may be lawfully pursued on the rest of the week, there are other engagements which, though not connected with the promotion of our worldly interests, are equally criminal and forbidden on the day which God has consecrated for his own service. Some of these, indeed, are of such a dissipating and demoralizing tendency, that they can at no time be indulged in, without the most chilling and deadening effects on the moral and religious feelings. Whatever goes to strengthen and perpetuate the influence which draws our affections from eternal things towards those of temporary

duration, ought ever to be viewed with a jealous eye; nay, to be guarded against, as a rock in the sea of life, on which, if we are driven by the violence of passion, our Christian principles are in danger of being shipwrecked. If it be our duty to "watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation,"* and if this duty comes recommended to us, not only by the injunction of infinite wisdom, but also by our own personal observation, then, on what grounds, it may be asked, can we vindicate a round of thoughtless levity, or a love of frivolous and hurtful pleasures, through which so many fall to their ruin?

But even supposing that our amusements are innocent in themselves, and kept too within the bounds which separate moderation from excess, still they are quite incompatible with the sentiments, the words, and the actions which befit our Sabbatic hours. To sanctify this sacred season in the sense which Heaven enjoins, and which our true, our everlasting interests require, is to cherish a spirit of piety and devotion, and to avoid every thing which would weaken and impede its exercise. Such is the conduct which the Almighty demands, and to

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* Mark xiv. 38.

which he holds out the most gracious and encouraging promises. "If," says he, "thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."*

Thus explicitly has God revealed his will, respecting the observance of the sacred rest; and if we devote any part of it to purposes inconsistent with the end for which it was instituted, we despise alike his authority, and injure our immortal souls. Indeed, while the scriptures inform us that the sanction of his laws is imperious and immutable, the baneful influence of secular pleasures is taught us by experience.—And though there were no express prohibition on the subject, it would be the interest of all who regard their eternal welfare to banish these from their thoughts, and to improve the leisure

* Isaiah lviii. 13, 14.

which the Sabbath affords for promoting their spiritual advantage. Can the man, then, who daringly and habitually prostitutes that day, or any part of it, to recreations altogether irreconcileable with the keeping of it holy, and who, instead of raising his heart to the uncreated source of all existence, and meditating on divine and heavenly things, gloats on objects of an earthly description, and wanders amid scenes of a fleeting duration—can that man be viewed in any other light than that of an enemy to God, a corrupter of society around him, and the barterer of his own peace beyond death and the grave? If there be any connexion between our present conduct and our future destiny, this alone is the state and character in which he is to be considered.

It will be proper, however, to point out, in some specific instances, the duty of abstaining from unseasonable pleasures on the Lord's day. And among the various ways in which that day is profaned, by the pursuit of unlawful enjoyment, is the too frequent practice of journeying abroad. Provided there be a suspension of the usual avocations of the week, many, however inconsistently with the Christian name which they bear, deem themselves at liberty, in all other respects, to spend their time just as they choose.

Accordingly, a jaunt is projected,—a walk is resolved on,—a visit must be paid; and the very season which the Majesty of Heaven has consecrated for his worship, is devoted, with a remorseless avidity, to these sacrilegious purposes. The evil here consists, not only in violating the divine command, and frustrating the object of the sacred institution, in so far as the offending individual himself is concerned, but also in setting an example of impiety,—hindering the devotions of others,—and frequently holding in requisition those lower animals, for whose resting on the Sabbath provision is no less made by the statutes of the Living God.

To reconcile this profanation to the conscience, various apologies are framed. Although the Sunday traveller may not professedly despise religion, yet he has a salvo at hand for the neglect of the obligations which it imposes. In his estimation, the confinement of the week is sufficient to justify his indulging in recreations on the Sabbatic rest. But the slightest examination of such a sentiment will show us how the result stands. The Sovereign of the universe has allowed us *six* portions of time for the management of our secular affairs, and claims the *seventh*, without compromise and without reservation, for his immediate service. Now, if we

must have amusements, does it not argue a spirit of impiety and rebellion to entrench on the rights and prerogatives of Heaven for these purposes, rather than spare for them any of those hours allowed for our temporal avocations? It is nothing but unhallowed presumption to disregard the authority of the Most High God, when it happens to interfere with our momentary gratifications. Nay, it is ruinous infatuation to make the all-important concerns of eternity give place to the fleeting vanities of the world. If the Almighty has indeed forbidden us to "do our own ways, and to find our own pleasure," on the Sabbath, we are bound implicitly to submit. And if, at other times, we are so much engrossed with our ordinary occupations, this certainly is an additional call upon us to embrace the opportunity which that holy festival affords, for attending to the prosperity and welfare of our immortal souls. Yes; and the Christian, who is worthy of the name, will cheerfully and thankfully obey the solemn injunction.

A similar excuse is urged by those who are given to sauntering or visiting on the season of sacred rest. But it is expressly said in the divine statute, "Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." The Jews were not permitted to leave their tents or their houses, except for the

purpose of repairing to the tabernacle, the temple, or the synagogue; a distance which, in the language of Scripture, is termed a Sabbath-day's journey. We are under the same restriction; we are bound by the same authority; we are responsible to the same omniscient and impartial Judge. What then is to be thought of the persons who, for a walk, or a complimentary call, absent themselves from the sanctuary during the whole or a part of its devotional services? Can it be affirmed of them, that they "honour God, not doing their own ways nor finding their own pleasure?" No, certainly; for as well may it be maintained that a child is dutiful to his parents, while he despises and disobeys their orders.

It will not do to say that their minds are religiously employed, while they are thus wilfully absent from the house of God. This cannot surely be the case, at the very time they are trampling under foot the positive injunction of Heaven. Nay, the same principles which lead them to "forsake the assembling of themselves together" for the worship of the King Eternal, will also exclude every thing that is pious and serious from their thoughts. But even should they give the most punctual attendance, forenoon and afternoon, in the sanctuary, this can furnish them with no apology for desecrating what re-

mains of the holy Sabbath. There are other services to be performed, equally important with going to church and joining in the devotions which are there offered; and unquestionably the discharge of one duty can never sanction the violation of another.

A practice no less prevalent, and no less criminal, is that of indulging in unsuitable conversation on this sacred day. Although we are peremptorily enjoined "not to speak our own words," but to "delight ourselves in the Lord," yet how seldom does social intercourse take a spiritual and religious turn! The merchant talks of commercial transactions,—the lawyer, of legal processes,—the farmer, of rural economy,—the warrior, of military tactics,—the worldling, of his gains,—the retailer of slander, of his neighbour's character. And on these topics they descant with a freedom, an animation, and a pleasure which clearly show how deeply they are interested; but let God, and salvation, and eternity be introduced, and that moment a manifest and repugnant dissatisfaction sits on every countenance. This shameful aversion to speak of Heaven and the concerns of the immortal soul, is a sad proof of the carnality of the affections, the obtuseness of the devotional feelings, and the estrangement of the heart from the great Author of our being. If

it be a truth, founded in our natural constitution, and sanctioned by invariable experience, that we are ever ready to make the object of our esteem the theme of our discourse,—and if this truth be assumed as a test in the case before us, then the conclusion must be, that they who thus break in on the sanctity of the Sabbath "are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

The Apostle's exhortation to the Ephesians, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers,"* is applicable to all professing Christians, every moment of their lives, and especially on that season which God has chosen and set apart for his immediate service. If we are assured, on the solemn declaration of our Saviour, "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment;"† and if such words are criminal, at whatever time they are pronounced,—how much must that criminality be increased when they are uttered on the day which we are commanded to "remember" and to "keep holy?" Than this nothing should operate as a more powerful dissuasive from

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* Ephes. iv. 29. † Matt. xii. 36.

feasting and revelling on that rest which is sacred to the Lord. Whether we frequent the tavern, or receive company at home, we interrupt the devotions of the family,—we divert the thoughts from the concerns of eternity to the frivolities of time,—and we turn the language of Zion into the style and expression of the world.

But though we should neither go abroad unnecessarily, nor engage in vain and secular conversation at home, we may still profane the Sabbath in our retirement, by the perusal of improper books. This is a species of amusement to which many, of whom better things might be expected, too often devote that holy festival. Philosophical argument, historical narration, dramatic composition, the fictions of romance, the newspapers of the day, all are read with a zest and an interest, while the inspired volume, which has God for its author, and happiness for its end,—which unfolds our origin and high destination,—which points out the way to heaven, and the bliss of immortality,—and which inculcates all that is noble, and good, and lovely in character, is suffered to lie neglected, as if unworthy of regard. What a criminal abuse of the high privileges with which God has favoured us! What a mark of ingratitude for the record which he has given us concerning his Son! What a

contempt of his law, which is "holy, and just, and good," and which is fitted to make us "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus!"* O, let us remember that we cannot deceive the omniscient Jehovah,—that he sees us as clearly in the secret chamber as in the open face of day,—and that he will render us finally responsible for our observance of the sacred rest, as well as for every other action of our lives.

ARTICLE FOURTH.

All Worldly Thoughts are to be abstained from on the Sabbath.

It is not sufficient merely, that our external deportment corresponds with the duties required; our ideas, our views, and our feelings must also bear on them the stamp and character of holiness. For what would it avail in the sight of Heaven, that we cease from our ordinary avocations, or from pleasurable amusements,—that we go to church, and pay every other outward respect to the Sabbatic institution, if, after all, we give our minds to the concerns of time, and allow

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* Rom. vii. 12. 2 Tim. iii. 15.

our imaginations to wander on the mountains of vanity? The statutes of the Lord are spiritual, and extend to the inmost movements of the soul, so that, if the heart be wanting, no services which we can perform will meet with his approbation.

Yet though this be a truth, arising from the very nature of God, and written as with a sunbeam in the records of his will, Is it not common, —let every reader put the question to his own conscience—Is it not common to exhibit the *form*, and withhold the *spirit* of obedience? Who can say that, on this season, he has never permitted improper thoughts to disturb his devotions; nay, that he has never cherished them, to the exclusion of every element of that worship and duty which Christianity enjoins? Our hands may be held from working,—our feet may be kept from the paths of folly,—our tongues may be refrained from unseasonable discourse,—and our eyes may be turned away from reading, and our ears from hearing, what is inconsistent with the sanctification of the Sabbath, and still we may be as truly engaged with the concerns and the pleasures of the world, as if these bodily members were free and unrestrained.

We ought ever to consider, that though "man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord

looketh on the heart,"* and "desireth truth in the inward parts."† Sincerity is so essential an ingredient in all our religious duties, that without it, our devotional services would be but mockery of the divine Omniscience. And as a stimulus to possess and cherish it, let it be remembered that, on the day of final retribution, when "God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ,"‡ he will strip off every guise which we may now assume. Then we shall see that the value of an action is to be estimated according to the motives and intentions from which it proceeds; and that even a meditated evil is to be deemed a transgression against the law and government of the supreme Jehovah. Convinced of this, let it be our habitual prayer to God that, by the purifying influences of his grace, we may be enabled to render to him a true and spiritual obedience, and to observe the Sabbath, as an earnest and foretaste of that eternal rest, into which his redeemed people are introduced, when all the turbulence, and disappointments, and trials of life have passed away.

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* 1 Sam. xvi. 7. † Psal. li. 6. ‡ Rom. ii. 16.

SECTION III.

On the Duties to be practised on the Sabbath.

THIS day must be sanctified by obedience to positive as well as to negative requirements. Sloth and indifference constitute no feature of the rest which it implies; nay, they are quite irreconcileable with the object which the great Creator had in view, when he appointed it as a religious festival to the human race. Although we cease from our ordinary business,—from pursuing our secular pleasures, or from giving our thoughts and imaginations to temporal concerns; yet we are not to sit down in that sluggish and listless inactivity, which leaves the mind unoccupied, and the heart uninterested and untouched. Something must be done, corresponding with our relative situation as creatures of God,—with our Christian profession, as friends and followers of Jesus,—and with our high responsibility as moral agents, whose present conduct will determine their future state. The duties which we are called to perform may be arranged under three classes—public, domestic, and secret. These we shall illustrate in the order now stated.

ARTICLE FIRST.

The Public Duties of the Sabbath.

HERE it may be observed, in general, that our obligations to the eternal Jehovah, as our creator, protector, and bountiful benefactor, should lead us to unite in expressing our cordial gratitude to him, for the blessings which we receive from him in common, and in deprecating the consequences of that rebellion against his law and government, of which we are all, without exception, guilty. This is a sentiment so natural and congenial to the human mind, that it has, in every age and nation of the world, been felt and acted upon, by all who have acknowledged the existence of a God, however vague, inconsistent, or erroneous may have been the notions which have, in many cases, been formed of his perfections and character. To whatever heathen country, whether of ancient or modern times, we turn our eyes, we behold the consecrated grove, the temple, and the altar,—localities which clearly evince the sense of mankind, as to the fear, and service, and honour, which we owe to the Almighty, not only as individuals, but as communities or congregated bodies. And the dictates

of conscience and of reason, thus manifested, are abundantly confirmed by the express and authoritative injunctions of divine revelation; while they are enforced by arguments drawn from the most stupendous displays of love and of mercy that can possibly be urged, to gain our affections and stimulate our obedience. Now, in the discharge of our public duties, we must,

I. Meet together in the house of God for devotional purposes.

If the highest appeal we can institute on this subject be to the statutes of the Almighty Sovereign; then, certainly, whatever these ordain, as an expression of his will regarding the sentiments and the conduct of his intelligent creatures, is binding on all, without exception, to whom they are known. No position can be more indisputable than this; and, accordingly, that law, which bears upon it the sanction and the signature of Heaven, must be admitted as the standard of right and wrong in all our religious and moral performances.

By the decision of Scripture, therefore, we must abide; and here the duty of convening in the sanctuary for the service of God is plainly and strictly inculcated. Like the Jews, we must, on the Sabbath, hold a holy convocation. For

what can be more explicit than the language of the Psalmist? "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts."—"Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."* What more decisive than the declaration of the eternal Jehovah? Even them," that is, the heathens who renounce their idolatry to serve the living God,—"Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."† What more unequivocal than the exhortation of the Apostle to the Hebrews? "Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."‡ And what more expressive than the animating promise of our Lord to his disciples? "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."§

Many other passages of the inspired volume

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* Psalm xcvi. 8—xcv. 2. † Isaiah lvi. 7.

‡ Heb. x. 24, 25. § Matt. xviii. 20.

might be adduced to point out, in the clearest manner, our imperious obligations to join in the public worship of God. But, as those already mentioned are sufficient for the purpose, it may now be observed that, in addition to precepts, we have also *examples* for the enforcement of the duty in question. David tells us that he "was glad when they said unto him, Let us go into the house of the Lord,"—and that he "would rather be a door-keeper in the house of his God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness."* It is also recorded, that our Lord, "as his custom was, went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up to read"† the Scriptures; and that the primitive Christians, "upon the first day of the week, came together to break bread," and "continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers."‡

In every succeeding age, regular attendance on the ordinances of religion has been a discriminating feature in the character of the servants of God. And it may safely be affirmed, that the persons who refuse this attend-

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* Psalm cxxii. 1.—lxxxiv. 10. † Luke iv. 16.

‡ Acts xx. 7.—ii. 42.

ance, or who comply merely when it suits their humour, or when they have no worldly business or idle amusements to engage them elsewhere, are utterly destitute, whatever they may pretend to the contrary, of those principles of faith, and obedience, and holiness, which Christianity peremptorily requires of all who would participate in the inheritance of the saints in light. Assuredly, "If we deny the Saviour before men," by withholding from him this public testimony of our homage and regard, "he will also deny us before his Father who is in Heaven."*

But such is the benevolent arrangement of God, that obedience to his command, in the respect now mentioned, is attended with the most important advantages. It goes to produce that spirit of humility, without which the Saviour cannot be embraced, so as to obtain an interest in his merits and mediation for our acceptance with Heaven. The very confessions which we make, and the very prayers which we offer in the sanctuary, are a virtual and open avowal of the criminality of our conduct—of the poverty which attaches to our spiritual condition,—and of the need we have of mercy for the pardon of our sins,

* Matt. x. 33.

and grace for the sanctification of our nature. And thus publicly and sincerely expressing at the footstool of the Eternal, our acknowledgments and our necessities, we cannot afterwards entertain the proud notion of our own goodness, or vaunt of the righteousness of our doings, without incurring the charge of hypocritical inconsistency, and enhancing our responsibility at the bar of retributive justice. And surely every one must know, that the eyes of his fellow-worshippers, as well as the eyes of the omniscient Jehovah, are directed towards his future movements; and that if his devotions be genuine and acceptable, they must be countenanced and supported by his subsequent deportment in the walks of life. Add to this, that the great object in preaching the Gospel is to lower man in his own view, that he may be exalted in the estimation of God; and that if we habitually wait upon the ministry of the word with that becoming attention which the message of Heaven demands, we cannot fail to think more modestly of ourselves, and to submit more unreservedly to the method of salvation which the Father of mercies has revealed.

Another tendency of public worship is to deepen and invigorate the religious feelings. There is something august and affecting in the appearance of many in humble prostration before the

throne of the Almighty, and in the act of pouring out their anthems of praise to Him who presides over all worlds, who extends his providential care to the minutest of his works, and who lavishes on those who love him, the choicest of his bounties. The very attitude and solemnity of the worshippers, have a direct influence in sobering the mind for pious sentiment, and in elevating its thoughts to divine and spiritual things. The expression of one individual is caught by another, until sympathy diffuses it over the whole assembly,—awakening, by its action and reaction, the energies of their souls, and imparting an increasing fervour to the services in which they are engaged.

Public worship tends also to strengthen that brotherly affection, which, as Christians, we are bound to cherish and to exercise. From the very constitution of our nature, we are led to take a lively interest, especially in those who habitually assemble with us in the same place—present their adorations to the same God—acknowledge the same wants—trust in the same Saviour—and vow their allegiance to the same Lord; and this interest prompts us to perform those acts of charity and kindness, which the Gospel inculcates as the distinguishing badge of the disciples of Christ. Besides, we cannot surely

enter the presence of the Omniscient Jehovah, and pray for blessings on one another, while a principle of hatred or malevolence rankles in our breasts. We cannot put up intercessions for our enemies, and yet be ready to resent the injuries, real or supposed, which they have done to us. We cannot petition for our benefactors, that they may be rewarded for their goodness, without feeling an emotion of gratitude for their generous deeds. We cannot implore the Father of mercies to look in pity on the poor and the distressed, and, notwithstanding, shut our ears against the cries of the miserable, and send them away with a "Be ye warmed," or "Be ye clothed," and withhold from them the "wherewithal" which it may be in our power to give.

Once more, public worship is the means of procuring the richest spiritual blessings. For if the language be addressed to every one, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,"* then, whatever may be the efficacy and success attending the prayers of a single individual, that efficacy and success must be increased, when many join together, and, with equal fervour, supplicate the Throne of Grace. Indeed, the

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* Matt. vii. 7.

Almighty expressly encourages us to hope for his special favour, in our thus meeting together for his worship, inasmuch as he says, " In all places, where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."*

Yet, after all, it is melancholy to think that many professing Christians act in direct opposition to their duty and their interest. While they would disavow, or even resent, the imputation of infidelity, they make no scruple whatever of habitually absenting themselves from the house of God, and of profaning the Sabbath, by devoting it to secular business, or to idle and frivolous amusements; and if we take their conduct for the genuine expression of their sentiments, they reverse the experience of the Psalmist, and deem " a day elsewhere better than a thousand in the courts of the Lord."† But there are also others, who make a kind of compromise between God and the world, and who, provided they go to church *occasionally*, or give up now and then a forenoon or afternoon to attendance in the sanctuary, so that they do not wholly neglect the public ordinances of religion, draw from this a sanction for desecrating the sacred rest, as often as their inclination or pleasure dictates. Thus

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* Exod. xx. 24. † Psalm lxxxiv. 10.

they cut and carve on the statutes of Heaven—thus they diminish the extent of the Divine requisitions—thus they do not conceive themselves bound *always* to obey, when it is said to them, "Let us go into the house of the LORD,"*—when the Almighty calls upon them to "give ear to his law, and to incline their ears to the words of his mouth."†

Such conduct marks a madness and an infatuation, of which, one should imagine, no rational and accountable being could possibly be guilty. There is no individual, who firmly believes in a future state of existence, where rewards and punishments are dispensed, according to the complexion of character in the present life, butwould wish, on his departure from the world, to enter the temple above, and dwell for ever in the blissful presence and enjoyment of the eternal Jehovah. Yet strange it is, that they who indulge this desire should despise the temple of God on earth, which has for its immediate object to prepare them for admission into that which is in heaven. If, then, they do not mingle in the congregation of the saints here, and take part in its devotional exercises, they can have no reason whatever to expect, that they shall be allowed to

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* Psalm cxxii. 1. † Ibid lxxviii. 1.

appear in " the General Assembly and Church of the First-born" hereafter.

There are, however, some who apologize for their absence from the house of God, on the alleged ground that they who habitually go to it are no better than others who keep away. —It is readily admitted as a lamentable fact, that all who frequent the sanctuary do not derive from it that moral and religious improvement which could be wished; but still, it is maintained that the fault, in this case, is to be ascribed not to the institution itself, but to their own listless indifference and cherished carnality. Public worship carries upon it the signet and the blessing of heaven's eternal King; and when celebrated with proper dispositions of mind, has a powerful tendency to promote the growth of piety and holiness—a truth to which thousands can bear honourable testimony, by their feelings and their conduct. Our duty is plain—the command of God is express and authoritative; and though there be those who receive little or no advantage from this ordinance, it is no proof whatever that we may not be profited. And, assuredly, it is no excuse for violating the positive injunction of the supreme Jehovah.

Others, again, plead that preaching is intended for the ignorant only, and that they who are

already versed in the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, have no need to be present where that exercise is performed. Now, even supposing the credit which they assume, for superior information, were justified by the real state of the case,—and this is a matter of no small degree of doubt,—it yet remains to be asked, Can they receive no benefit from listening to the intimations of the all-wise God? Are their memories so tenacious, that they have nothing to be reminded of? Are they so confirmed in their religious principles, that a fresh exhibition of the Divine promises can impart to them no additional strength? Are they so intimately acquainted with all the force and bearings of Christian motives, that the reiterated propounding of these cannot accelerate their progress in the race appointed them to run? But granting all this, it is still to be observed, that the sermon is the least important part of the service to which we are called in the house of God. Public prayer and praise are duties which the learned and the unlearned are alike bound to discharge; and the voluntary and wanton omission of these is contempt poured on the Majesty of Heaven, and the eviction of a spirit the very reverse of what the Gospel enjoins. Besides, consider the influence of *example*. People, in general, are not very apt

to think themselves ignorant; and when they see others keeping away from the courts of the Lord, in the belief that they can hear nothing there which they did not know before, they will claim the same privilege, until, by this rivalship and imitation, the institution of God is totally neglected.

Another excuse for irregular attendance on public worship, is founded on the alleged care which is necessary for the preservation of health. We are told by those who urge this excuse, that in winter the roads are bad and the weather cold, and that they cannot expose themselves with safety to damp feet and an inclement atmosphere. It is true that God "will have mercy and not sacrifice;"* but then they should remember, it is also true that he cannot be imposed upon by any hollow pretences. Now let them ask themselves, Would the same circumstances detain them from walking abroad or from visiting, even on the Sabbath, when they cannot be at church? Would the same circumstances detain them from going to a party, or spending hours from home, on any other day? Would the same circumstances detain them from pursuing their

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* Hos. vi. 6.—Matt. ix. 13.

worldly business, or engaging in unnecessary amusements? These are questions which should be seriously resolved by all, who urge such a plea, in extenuation of their guilt in neglecting the public ordinances of God. And I would exhort them to consider, that the time is coming when all their actions shall undergo a strict and impartial scrutiny at the bar of Omniscience, and when every human being shall receive according to his doings, whether they have been good or bad.

Others again tell us,—and it is the only remaining apology I shall at present notice,—that though they absent themselves from church, they employ their time properly at home. This is undoubtedly so far right; but is it to be brought forward as an atonement for the wilful violation of the positive and authoritative injunction, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is?" True and indisputable is the fact, that were they as piously and devoutly engaged as they pretend, the very feelings and motives which prompt them to serve God in their retirement, would also carry them to his courts, as often as an opportunity is there afforded them of joining in the worship of his name. Their religion, if from above, will not be cónfined to half measures, but will lead

them to the performance of every duty which the King Eternal has imposed on them as moral and responsible beings. To shew, therefore, that their principles are such as the Gospel requires, they must readily and joyfully obey when it is said to them, "Let us go unto the house of the Lord."

If the Almighty has commanded us to assemble together for celebrating his praises,—for imploring his protection and his blessing,—and for listening to the things which belong to our everlasting peace; we cannot be aware of this, and at the same time neglect our privileges,—without evincing our ingratitude for his goodness,—without incurring his righteous displeasure,—without ruining, if grace prevent not, our immortal interests. —How awful then must be the state of those who never think at all of their spiritual wants? who look upon the house of God as the abode of gloom and superstition? who seldom or never enter within its walls, or who, when they do so, are influenced by motives quite foreign from principles of devotion? What is this but the most rooted and inveterate antipathy to the practice of godliness, and the most avowed opposition to the authority of the living God? O! that such persons would seriously consider the criminality and danger of their conduct—that they would think

of the solemnities of a death-bed, and of that judgment and eternity which await them. If they do not meet with the saints for the worship of God on earth, they cannot be prepared for joining in the anthems of the redeemed in Heaven.

II. Being thus assembled, we must engage with spirit and life in the services which we are called to perform.

From the listlessness and formality which are too frequently exhibited, it is no breach of charity to believe, that many appear in the sanctuary with very improper motives. And when this is the case, there can be no distinct recognition of the object and intention of public worship,—there can be no solemn and practical impression of the divine Omniscience upon the mind,—there can be no becoming homage to that Almighty Being who sways the sceptre of the universe,—there can be no real and lasting advantage from attending in the courts of the Lord. Humility and awe are indispensably necessary in all our approaches to God, in the ordinances of his appointment; for if in these ordinances he is spiritually present, it were in us an indication of the most criminal contempt of his majesty and holiness, to assume the posture of

levity, or to betray an unseemly deportment.—The angels who never sinned, "cover their faces and their feet with their wings,"* before his throne on high; and surely it cannot be less suitable and becoming that on earth he "should be feared in the assembly of the saints, and be had in reverence of all them that are about him."†

1. It may be asked then, How should we conduct ourselves in the sanctuary, when we are called to engage in *prayer?* This is a duty of the most imperious obligation, and of the most salutary importance. It rests upon the dictates of natural reason,—is sanctioned by the express injunction of Heaven,—is recommended by the example of the pious and the good in all ages of the world,—and is directly calculated to promote the best interests of the immortal soul. Yet after all, is it not wofully neglected by many professing Christians, even at the time they assume the attitude of worshippers in the courts of the Lord?

There are those who give themselves to something very different from inward devotion, and who, if they yield a passive acquiescence to the addresses which are offered at the throne of Divine Grace, bestow not a thought on the import

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* Isaiah vi. 2. † Psalm lxxxix. 7.

and necessity of the blessings implored. It is enough, for aught they care, that he who officiates as the organ of the congregation, prefers petitions in their name; and without making these petitions the channels for conveying their own desires to Heaven,—without accompanying them with their cordial amen, as their duty and their interest require,—without feeling the least concern about spiritual things, or breathing the slightest aspiration after the favour of God,—they content themselves with the mere formality of their bodily presence,—with the mere lifeless routine of external ceremony. This is not that union of souls which enters into the very essence of social worship; this is not that spiritual homage which the King Eternal demands of all who approach his sacred footstool. The Omniscient Jehovah claims the understanding and the heart; and these must be brought into exercise in every act of devotion.

But there are others who, though they do join in the prayers of the sanctuary, feel no delight whatever in these solemn acts. Their gratitude for the Divine goodness is vague and undefined—cold and unimpassioned. And if they have no due sense of the manifold obligations under which they are laid, they have just as little of their need of the pardoning mercy which they request.

Trusting to what they consider the harmless tenor of their lives, or the general righteousness of their doings, they look to God for such supplies only, from the fulness of the Redeemer's merits, as, in their estimation, will be sufficient to make up for the small or occasional deficiencies of their own characters. Sentiments like these are ruinous to our spiritual interests, as they lead us to build our hopes on a false and deceitful foundation. In all our addresses to the Throne of Grace, we must be convinced of our moral depravity in the sight of God; and, renouncing all dependence on ourselves, we must embrace Jesus as "all our salvation and all our desire."

2. What should be our conduct in the sanctuary, when we are called to join in the *praise* of God? His name, whether we consider the absolute perfections of his nature, or the relation in which we stand to him, as our Creator, our Preserver, and our Redeemer, is worthy of being celebrated in the highest strains. And to laud him in songs of gratitude is a duty which the Scriptures enjoin in the most explicit terms—which the church on earth has uniformly practised in every age—and which is exhibited as the delightful employment of the general assembly of the redeemed in heaven. "O come," says David, "let us sing unto the Lord; let us make

a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."* "In that day," declares the Prophet Isaiah, "shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."† "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people; he hath redeemed Jerusalem."‡ "Let the word of Christ," exhorts the Apostle in his epistle to the Colossians, "dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."§ We are told that Jesus and his disciples, after celebrating the first Sacramental Supper, sung a hymn before they went out to the Mount of Olives; and that at midnight Paul and Silas, while in prison at Philippi, "prayed and sang praises unto God,"‖—a practice which, Pliny informs us in his epistle to the Emperor Trajan, was common to the Christians in their religious assemblies. And in John's vision of the heavenly state, the holy angels and glorified spirits

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* Psalm xcv. 1, 2. † Isaiah xxvi. 1. ‡ Ibid lii. 9.
§ Col. iii. 16. ‖ Matt. xxvi. 30. Acts xvi. 25.

are represented as " crying with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God, for ever and ever. Amen."*

Thus our obligations to extol Jehovah in the sanctuary are evident and indisputable. But are they always acknowledged and discharged by us, when we come together for devotional purposes? If it is our duty, as the Apostle tells us, to " sing with the spirit and the understanding," and to " make melody in our hearts to the Lord,"† it is not enough that we join in symphony with the voices around us; we must also know and feel the import of the praises which we offer, and delight in raising our notes and halleluiah's to our God and Redeemer. This is the service which he requires us to perform; and, therefore, to give him the praise of our lips, while we withhold from him the homage of our thoughts and our affections, is to present incense on an unhallowed altar, and to provoke his displeasure, for the punishment of such contempt and mockery of his name.

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* Rev. vii. 10. 12. † 1 Cor. xiv. 15. Eph. v. 19.

But here we would address a word to those who, amid the anthems which are raised to Heaven, sit as mute as if they had not a tongue to speak of the Most High,—as if they allowed him no claim on their religious adoration,—as if they deemed themselves under no obligation to his goodness,—as if they cared for none of the blessings which he has to bestow! To shake their fatal obduracy,—to rouse them from their delusive repose,—and to excite in them a lively concern about their eternal welfare, we would tell them of the tremendous precipice on which they are placed, and urge them to flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the Gospel: we would press upon them the necessity of being spiritually minded, and declare to them their unfitness for worshipping God in his temple above, while they feel no inclination to exalt his name in his courts below.

One and all to whom this applies, we would beseech to consider for a moment their guilt and their danger, and to desist from insulting the Almighty by such provoking irreverence. If your tongue be silent when it should be vocal, your heart cannot be properly engaged; and if your eyes be gadding about from object to object, you cannot possibly attend to the things which belong to your everlasting peace. Lay down then the weapons of rebellion, and do not fight against the

Omnipotent Jehovah. In the strength of divine grace, turn from idols to serve the living God,—shew your Christianity by its effects upon your religious deportment,—" seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."*

3. What, we would again ask, should be our conduct in the sanctuary, when we are invited to participate in that solemn ordinance of our holy religion—the *sacrament* of the Supper? On the eve of his departure from the world, Jesus said to his followers, " This do in remembrance of me;"† and ought not such a command to be cheerfully and thankfully obeyed by all who trust in him as their Saviour, and acknowledge him as their Lord? Surely, when we think of his unparalleled condescension to our guilty race,—when we think on the end for which he suffered, and the numerous and momentous blessings which he purchased with his blood,—we cannot be indifferent to an institution appointed by him as a memorial of his death. Yet strange it is, many professing Christians refuse to sit at his table, there to testify their gratitude for his goodness, and to renew their allegiance to his service!

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* Isaiah lv. 6. † Luke xxii. 19.

They are not prepared; and will this excuse them? No; assuredly the fault is their own.—For if they have not availed themselves of the spiritual advantages which are afforded them,—if they have not supplicated at the throne of grace, which is accessible to their approach, for the blessings and the assistance they require, the neglect renders them only the more criminal in the sight of God. They cannot be fit to die, while they are unfit to commemorate the redeeming love of Jesus. But whatever may be their state, when the great Lord of all summons them from the world, they must go the way whence they shall not return. O may this consideration rouse them to a concern for their eternal welfare, and lead them, in humble dependence on the aid of Heaven, to make their calling and election sure!

When seated at the sacramental feast, we must recollect that something more than the mere outward action is necessary, to render us acceptable guests. For what is it to receive the emblems of Christ's broken body, and shed blood? It is to evince our love to him for his generous condescension—to avouch before angels and men our acceptance of him as our Saviour—to declare our conviction of the truth of his Gospel, the divinity of his character, and the perfection of his sacrifice—to profess ourselves his dis-

ciples and friends, and to tell the world that we glory in his cross; and that we are not ashamed to call him Master, and to obey his laws. If these be not our views and our purposes, it is in vain that we approach the sacred table. Nay, by doing so, we profane that holy ordinance, crucify afresh the Lord of glory, and enhance our future condemnation.

4.—Lastly; What should be our conduct in the sanctuary, when we are called to *hear* the word? If the great end of preaching be to shew men their guilt and criminality in the sight of God—to alarm them with the terrors of the broken law—to point out to them the way of salvation through the merits and mediation of the Saviour, and to stimulate them by the most cogent motives to cultivate piety and holiness, as the proper evidence of their faith in his name; how, we would ask, can these ends be attained, unless we listen with seriousness to the doctrines and the duties which are propounded, illustrated, and enforced? Our wandering thoughts must be called in, and fixed on the interesting truths which are uttered in our hearing. To betray a careless disposition, is to lose the advantage which we might otherwise gain, and to trifle with the solemn and momentous realities of eternity.

The preacher, standing in Christ's stead, and

beseeching sinners to be reconciled unto God, delivers a message invested with all the authority and weight, which an immediate communication from Heaven could claim. And if, as Solomon says, "Where the word of a king is, there is power,"* with what reverence and humility should we attend to the mandates of that Almighty Sovereign whose empire is the universe, and at whose reproof the pillars of heaven tremble? Surely, when the plans of Infinite Wisdom are made known—when the redemption of a lost world, through the obedience, sufferings, and death of the blessed Immanuel, is announced to the guilty—when those works of condescension and love, which excite the wonder and admiration of the angels who never sinned, are held up to view, and when the grandeur and retributions of eternity are brought forward; these ought to suppress all light and unbecoming gestures, and to influence and solemnize our thoughts. Yes, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints;" and he declares that he "will look to the man who trembles at his word."†

Such, however, is the fastidious taste of some hearers, that they care for nothing but what is clothed in the finest language, and recommended

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* Eccles. viii. 4. † Psalm lxxxix. 7.—Isaiah lxvi. 2.

by all the graces of a captivating eloquence. Without these trappings and embellishments, the statements of the Gospel fatigue and exhaust their patience. And not less culpable is that tendency in others, to carry the love of system with them into the house of God, and to judge of every thing which proceeds from the speaker by an assumed standard of their own. We do not condemn, we applaud them for weighing what they hear; because this is their duty, their privilege, and their interest, as intelligent and accountable beings. But then, they must weigh it, not in the falsifying scales of human invention, but in the just and unerring balance of the sanctuary. All undue prepossessions must be laid aside, and the authority of "Thus saith the Lord," must determine and regulate their opinions.

Again, the Word must be listened to with self-application. This is what a great proportion of hearers deplorably neglect. Priding themselves on the rectitude of their own dispositions, and views, and conduct, they shut their ears against all instruction and reproof; and with a dexterous but ungentle hand, apply to others, whom they consider of opposite characters, all that is said. In every sermon addressed to us, we must regard ourselves as individually con-

cerned. If a doctrine be expounded, each must receive it for the illumination and establishment of his own mind. If an admonition against sin be administered, each must take it as an admonition against his own. And if a precept be inculcated and enforced, each must bring it home, as inculcated and enforced upon himself.

On a review of our past conduct, what reason have we all to humble ourselves before the Searcher of Hearts, and to say, with the awakened publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"* In future, let us beware of profaning the sanctuary, by assuming the form, while we have not the spirit of devotion. Let us yield to the Lord our understandings, our wills, and our affections; and let us "keep our foot, when we go to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools."†

ARTICLE SECOND.

The Domestic Duties of the Sabbath.

THE Sabbath is a season, appointed by the Supreme Creator, for his own immediate service;

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* Luke xviii. 13. † Eccl. v. 1.

and no part of it can be devoted to listless indolence, idle amusements, or secular pursuits, without violating his law, and despising his authority. Every reasonable man, acquainted with the subject, will, in speculation at least, assent to the truth of this position. And yet, alas! how many are there who practically commit the very evil which, in their sober judgment, they condemn; and who spend that holy day as thoughtlessly as if they had no God to fear, and no soul to be saved.

We are under the most specific and peremptory obligations to wait upon the Lord in the public ordinances of religion, and to offer to him our sincere, and grateful, and reverential homage. But this is not all; for though we should regularly and devoutly "assemble ourselves together" in the courts of his house, still our remaining Sabbatic hours, which are equally important, and equally intended for sacred purposes, must also be disposed of in a pious and becoming manner. We have domestic duties to perform, which we cannot innocently neglect. These may be reduced to the three following; namely, a watchful inspection over the conduct of all committed to our charge,—the religious instruction of our children and servants,—and the worship of God in our families.

I. We must exercise a watchful inspection over the conduct of all committed to our charge.

In the formation of families, the Author of Nature has intrusted parents with the care of their offspring; and, from the endearing relation in which they mutually stand, to no other hands could that care have been so wisely consigned. None could feel such a deep concern in these young immortals; and none could possess such favourable opportunities for superintending their interests, and promoting their moral and spiritual welfare.

For the proper discharge of that important trust, parents are invested with an authority, which they are bound to exercise; not indeed with the wantonness of a capricious tyrant, but with the benevolence of an affectionate and tender friend. This is recognised in various passages of sacred scripture, and especially in that which enjoins them to "have their children in subjection with all gravity."* Nay, farther, as the government which they are called to administer extends to all their household, of whomsoever it is at the time composed, it is their bounden duty to enforce on every individual of their little com-

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* 1 Tim. iii. 4.

munity, the strictest attention to divine and heavenly things.

Now we find that, in the code of moral laws published with majestic solemnity by God himself on mount Sinai, heads of families are commanded to see that their sons and daughters, men-servants and maid-servants, and even the stranger within their gates, do "remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy." Yes, they must see that none under their roof profane that day, by doing any unnecessary work,—by loitering at home when they should be engaged in the House of God,—or by following the unhallowed devices of their own hearts, instead of walking in the paths of holiness, and preparing for that eternity into which they must sooner or later enter.

What was the eulogium which the Almighty pronounced on the patriarch Abraham? It was this: "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord."* The example of so eminent a saint, it becomes parents, if they would aspire after the Divine approbation, faithfully and constantly to imitate. But if they will not be won to their duty by such a motive, let

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* Gen. xviii. 19.

them be deterred from the neglect of it by the threatened punishment. For listen to the language of God to Samuel, concerning the remissness of Eli in his domestic management: "I will judge," said he, "his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."† Thus, the responsibility under which governors of families are laid is great indeed; and lightly as many may think of it now, the time is coming when an account of the charge committed to them will be required at their hands. This is a consideration directly calculated to impress and to influence; and it would be well were the practical conviction ever present to their minds, that they must one day reckon with God for the manner in which they have conducted their stewardship.

How different would be the aspect of society, if parents and masters universally exercised that watchful inspection which their relative situation implies and demands! Then we should see children and servants regularly attending the House of the Lord;—then we should see them shewing a becoming respect for the sanctity of the Sabbath;—then we should see them shunning the

† 1 Sam. iii. 13.

paths in which destroyers go, living in the fear of God, and discharging with fidelity the various duties to which they are called. Let these things be carefully weighed, and let them stimulate to circumspection all whom they immediately concern.

II. On the Sabbath, we must attend to the religious instruction of our children and servants.

The tender mind is susceptible of any impression, and hence it is of vast importance that it should be properly imbued and directed. In the education of youth, we should turn their attention to spiritual things;—we should tell them of God, and of their relation to him as his creatures, and the objects of his constant superintending care;—we should tell them of Christ, their Redeemer, and of the necessity of believing in his name, and trusting in his righteousness for the remission of sin;—we should tell them of the Holy Ghost, and of the part which he performs in preparing the soul for heaven and eternal life.

Parents are under an express injunction to instruct their offspring in the principles of piety and holiness. "These words," said Moses, referring to the laws which the Almighty had promulgated from Sinai, "these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and

thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."* And as an example of obedience to the high authority with which that command is given, take the conduct of David, the Israelitish monarch. We find him, venerable with age, and seated upon his throne, first charging the representatives of the nation, as they regarded the Divine favour, to adhere steadfastly and resolutely to the statutes of Heaven; and then solemnly exhorting his royal successor to devote himself to the service of the great Sovereign of all. "And thou Solomon, my son," said he, "know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."†

In acting up to their high responsibility, especially on the day of sacred rest, when leisure is afforded them for that purpose, parents must carefully and repeatedly inculcate upon their

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* Deut. vi. 6, 7. † 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

children the whole doctrines and duties of Christianity, as soon as they are fit to perceive their import. They must be taught that they are guilty before God,—that sin exposes them to his righteous displeasure,—and that it is their interest, as well as their duty, to seek his forfeited favour, through Jesus Christ, who is the only true and living way to everlasting happiness. They must be taught the profoundest reverence for the Divine perfections, and, consequently, the evil and the danger of speaking lightly of religion, and of taking the name of God in vain. They must be taught that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,"* and that to love him with all their heart, and strength, and mind, is their bounden and indispensable duty. They must be taught to attend regularly and punctually on public ordinances, and to "remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy." They must be taught the necessity of prayer, of piety, and of progressive advancement in the Divine life. They must be taught that to honour and obey their father and mother is the first commandment with promise; and that the cultivation of a kind and benevolent disposition, is a distinguishing feature in the Christian character. And they

* Prov. ix. 10.

must farther be taught to observe integrity in all that they say and do,—to guard against pride, and vanity, and selfishness,—and to exercise meekness, and patience, and self-denial.

These instructions, which cannot be too frequently inculcated, must be imparted to servants as well as to children. They also are under the inspection of the head of the family; and the principle of benevolence alone should lead him to consult their spiritual interests. From the relative situation in which he stands to them, the obligation which that benevolence imposes on him, to do all in his power, not only by example, but by counsel and precept, to promote the welfare of their immortal souls, is strengthened and increased. Yes, he is bound to inculcate and enforce upon them, the duty which they owe to the great Lord of all; and thus to "walk within his house with a perfect heart."* And O how delightful would it be to see, on the Sabbath evening, the master, with his household around him, conversing with them about the things which belong to their everlasting peace,—refreshing their memories by a recapitulation of the truths which they have heard in the sanctuary,—reading and expounding to them the Oracles of

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* Psalm ci. 2.

the living God,—and, by catechetical examination, facilitating their progress in religious knowledge! If he has any regard for the sanctification of the Lord's day—any desire to forward the eternal advantage of those with whom he is so closely connected—this will be his aim, his practice, and his pleasure.*

The lessons of Christianity are included in that "nurture and admonition of the Lord," in which parents, at the baptismal font, solemnly engage to train up their offspring. But how often do they forget and violate that engagement! How often do they shew an indifference about the matter, amounting to a criminal disregard of the souls of their children, or an avowed denial of the blessings which religion confers! How often, in place of meeting with their families, for the purpose of pious conference and spiritual instruction, do they seek amusements abroad, or receive company at home, profaning the Sabbath, and whiling away the precious hours which ought to be spent in a very different service!

One word more, and we have done with this particular. Parents, witness the awful consequences of your neglect, in the temper and conduct of the rising generation! With you their

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* Note K.

early years are intrusted, and on your attention to that important charge, the character of the future man, in a great measure, depends. And need we urge you to fidelity, by motives arising from the most endearing ties which can link human beings together? Need we tell you of its bearings on the happiness of the domestic circle, and on the prosperity and welfare of society at large? Nay, need we remind you of the time when you must stand before the tribunal of your Omniscient Judge, and when it will be your unspeakable felicity if you shall be able to say, Behold! here am I, and the children whom God has given me? But,

III. Another domestic duty on the Sabbath is the worship of God in our families.

The very light of nature points out the obligations under which we are laid to perform this duty. That supreme and beneficent Being, to whom our little community is indebted for existence, and protection, and every comfort, has undoubtedly a rightful claim to our joint homage, and gratitude, and praise. And as there are many blessings, spiritual and temporal, which are alike necessary for all the members of which it is composed, it is fit and reasonable that we should implore these with united importunity at the throne

of divine grace. Indeed the very Heathens, to whom the disclosures of revelation were unknown, acted upon this obvious principle; and accordingly we read, both in sacred and profane history, of their household gods, to whom each family apart addressed its adorations and prayers.

But in the records of inspiration, the duty of domestic worship is clearly recognised and enjoined. We are commanded to "pray every where," and "to pray with all prayer and supplication."* Now, it is manifest that the universality of these expressions, if they have any meaning at all, must imply that very species of devotion, of which we are at present speaking. It is mentioned by the Psalmist, as a characteristic feature of the righteous, that "the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in their tabernacles;"† and the Prophet Jeremiah, in his denunciation of the Divine fury, classes "those families that call not on the name of God," with the heathen that know him not."‡

In every past age of the world, all, whose religion has been distinguished for its vitality and genuineness, have been habitual in their domestic addresses to the Great Fountain of all good.—

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* 1 Tim. ii. 8.—Eph. vi. 18. † Psalm cxviii. 15.

‡ Jer. x. 25.

Abraham, in journeying with his family from his paternal home, "built an altar wherever he rested;" and there, "with them," called upon "the name of the Lord."* Joshua resolutely declared, in the presence of all the assembled tribes of Judah, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."† David, when he had performed his devotions in the tabernacle, "returned to bless his household."‡ Our Lord himself, the great pattern of piety and excellence, retired to pray with his disciples. And Cornelius the centurion "feared God, with all his house,—and prayed to God alway."§

Thus the duty of family worship is altogether indisputable, either on admitting the being and attributes of God, or on recognising the divine authority by which it is enjoined. But if we are bound to discharge this duty on every day of the week, how much greater must be our obligation to do so on that sacred season expressly set apart by the statute of Heaven, for the immediate and exclusive service of God? From an aversion to godliness, or a spirit of religious indifference, we may disobey the mandate; but we cannot deny the truth and equity, on which it is

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* Gen. xii. 8. † Josh. xxiv. 15. ‡ 2 Sam. vi. 20.
§ Acts x. 2.

founded. The very injunction, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy," obliges us to acts of domestic piety on that day, unless it can be shewn that it commences and expires with the public services of the sanctuary, and that such acts are no part of the sanctification of it, which the Almighty in his sovereignty peremptorily requires.

In the morning, before repairing to the house of God, no conduct is more becoming the head of a Christian family, than that of assembling his children and servants together, to render their united praise and homage to the great Parent of all the families of the earth, and to implore his countenance and support throughout the day, and his presence and blessing when they enter his courts, and there engage in the public offices of religion. And again in the evening, it equally becomes him to approach, with his little society, the throne of Divine Grace, to pray that they may be enabled to profit by the devotional exercises in which they have been employed,—to thank the Lord for all the goodness which he has manifested towards them,—and to resign themselves, and all in whom they are concerned, to his care and protection during the silent watches of the night.

Such parents as have themselves tasted that

the Lord is gracious, will feel an anxious desire that their children also should participate in his favour;—that their souls should be enriched with the dew of his blessings,—that they should grow up in his "nurture and admonition," prospering before him like "willows by the streamlets of water." This is the true way to promote their progress in education—to brighten their prospects in life—to render them useful in the stations and relations in which they may be placed—to make them comfortable and happy in their pilgrimage on earth—and, what is of higher moment still, to prepare them for glory, honour, and immortality in the kingdom of heaven.

But, O! how much is this important duty neglected! There are parents who, notwithstanding their Christian profession, and their most solemn vows, never think of leading their children to the throne of Divine Grace, and who live as prayerless, as if they were independent beings, and had no spiritual favour to ask. And to what is this inconsistency and omission to be ascribed, but to a complete destitution of all true religious feeling, and a total insensibility to the wants and the interests of their immortal souls? Such a course they cannot persist in and finally prosper; and we would urge them, both for their own sakes, and for the sake of those com-

mitted to their trust, to act a different part,—to imbibe the spirit of the Gospel which they profess to believe,—and to allow it a constraining and devotional influence on their hearts and their conduct. And may the Father of every good and perfect gift, enable them to observe his statutes and his laws, and to walk humbly before him in the pilgrimage of life

ARTICLE THIRD.

The Secret Duties of the Sabbath.

ALL our hours, on this holy day, must be devoted to the immediate service of God, excepting only so much of them, as is taken up by works of *necessity* and *mercy*. It is not enough, therefore; that we worship our Creator in the sanctuary and in the family; we must also, in our retirement, give ourselves to meditation, self-examination, reading, and prayer.

I. The first secret duty, then, which we shall here mention, is devout meditation.

Than such an exercise, nothing falls in more directly with the great end of our being; and nothing is of more essential importance to the prosperity and welfare of our immortal souls. It

is by this means, under the blessing of Heaven, that our notions of God are enlarged,—that our faith in the Redeemer is increased,—that our love of all that is excellent and good is animated,—and that our resolutions to forsake sin and follow after holiness are confirmed. The longer a subject is dwelt upon, and the more frequently it is brought under the eye of the mind, the better is it understood, and the deeper is the impression that is made upon the memory. If, for instance, when we retire from the house of the Lord, we were to banish serious reflection, or lapse into indolence, or enter into frivolous amusements, or indulge in secular concerns,—all that we have heard, and all that we have felt, would, like the baseless fabric of a vision, vanish from our thoughts, and leave not a trace behind. To ruminate in secret on the instructions delivered to us in public, is of the utmost consequence. It is that digestive power which assimilates them to our wants, and fits them for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

But in our solitude, we must meditate on every subject which the institution of the Sabbath is calculated to suggest. On this day, all that is great and glorious,—all that is irresistible in power, infinite in wisdom, and ineffable in goodness, is presented to our view. We behold crea-

tion, in all its order and magnificence, rising before us,—the heavens stretching out their curtain,—the luminaries of the firmament starting into their places,—the earth assuming its form, its verdure, and its beauty,—and the various gradations of animated beings with which it is peopled, springing into existence, and enjoying every comfort which their nature and circumstances require. And while, amid the infinitude of the Creator's works, we are constrained to say, Lord, "what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"* let us, with profound humility and reverence, adore his perfections,—render to him the grateful homage of our hearts for his goodness, and resolve, in dependence on his aid, to devote our lives to his service, and the promotion of his glory.

On this day we are called to meditate on a work—more magnificent—more benevolent—and more interesting still—the redemption of our fallen race, through the wondrous condescension of God's beloved Son. Out of the ruins which sin had wrought in the soul, we see appearing a renovated system, adorned with all the features of holiness, loveliness, and excellence, and destined

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* Psalm viii. 4.

to exhibit for ever, the freeness, the richness, and the triumphs of sovereign grace. Yes, in this standing memorial of Christ's resurrection from the grave, we perceive the gates of the celestial paradise thrown open, and obtain a view of that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and imperishable in its nature, and which is the appointed and happy portion of all who believe and obey the Gospel. And what are the feelings which this prospect is designed and fitted to awaken? Certainly they are the feelings of obligation and of gratitude "to Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,"* —to him who fulfilled in our stead all the demands of the law which we had broken, and who purchased by his sufferings and death every spiritual blessing which we need.

Again, on this day, which is a pledge and foretaste of that rest which God has prepared for his people hereafter, we are called to meditate also on death and eternity. As our existence in the present world is of short duration, it becomes us to look forward to the period which shall dissolve our connexion with this passing scene, and introduce us into the region of spirits. Leaving in thought the confines of time, and entering

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* Rev. i. 5.

within the city of the New Jerusalem, let us figure to ourselves the glorious society of the triune Jehovah, of angels who never sinned, and of all the redeemed from the earth,—and conceive of the unwearied employment, and the sublime delights of that Sabbath which shall never end.—And let the prospect stimulate us to prepare for joining in these exalted services,—ever pressing onward in our Christian course, that we may reach the stature of perfect man in Christ Jesus, and that at last, we may be crowned with glory, honour, and immortality, in the kingdom above.

These are the general topics, on which we should meditate in our Sabbath retirement; and these are the sentiments and the resolutions which we should form. But, O! how differently are many of us employed in our secret chambers! We may withdraw, indeed, for a season, from society; but is it to think of God, of the Saviour, and of our eternal concerns? No, alas! we ruminate on the pleasures of sin,—form schemes of worldly policy and ambition,—and waste our precious time in the service of the Prince of Darkness. Surely, if we believe in a state of future retribution,—if we value the favour of the great Judge of all,—if we regard our happiness through a boundless duration,—this is the most consum-

mate folly of which, as rational and accountable beings, we can possibly be guilty. Let us remember that there is a final reckoning—that our present life is but the infancy of our existence—and that "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave,"* to which we are all hastening our steps.

II. Another secret duty on the Sabbath is self-examination.

Conformity to the Divine will is the measure of human perfection; and this conformity all who embrace the Gospel must study to attain. For if holiness be not the character by which we are distinguished, we cannot enjoy the favour of that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil without abhorrence,—nor the blessings purchased by that Saviour, who died to redeem us from all iniquity. It is therefore of vast importance, to ascertain the true state of our souls,—that we may apply the remedy provided for our spiritual diseases.

This is a duty in which we ought daily to engage, but more especially on the Sabbath, which affords a specific opportunity for the purpose—an opportunity, the neglect of which evinces a total

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* Eccles. ix. 10.

unconcern about our eternal destination. To inspect our hearts and try our ways, or to inquire into our sentiments, our feelings, and our conduct, is the proper method to discover what submission we yield to the law and government of God,—what gratitude we shew for all the unmerited kindness which he has manifested towards us,—and what zeal and efforts we exert for the promotion of his glory and interests in the world. It is thus we arrive at the truth of the case—it is thus we find out the nature and extent of our obedience—it is thus we trace the channel in which our affections run—it is thus we perceive whether we are in the path which leads to everlasting life, or in that which terminates in everlasting destruction.

On the Sabbath, therefore, let us retire into our closets, and examine into the views we have of sin. Do we consider it as the greatest of all evils,—as that which tends to overturn the moral government of God, and to introduce anarchy, desolation, and wretchedness, into the world? Do we look upon it as involving ingratitude and direct hostility to the great Author of our being, and the supreme source of all our enjoyments? And, beholding the attitudes which it assumes—the principles in which it originates—and the dismal and never-ending consequences to which

it leads, do we detest it as the enemy of all righteousness, and the destroyer of our happiness beyond the grave? Unless we bring our past lives before the tribunal of the divine law, and let conscience, without partiality, speak out the truth—unless we institute a minute and particular scrutiny, however humiliating it may be to the pride, and painful to the corruptions of our hearts—we can never know the precise elements of which our characters are composed.

In our solitude, we must examine into what reception we have given to Christ, as he is offered to us in the Gospel. Do we then renounce the misleading speculations of a vain philosophy, and, with the docile submission of children, listen to him, as the great Prophet of the Church? Do we lay aside every prejudice created in our minds by self-sufficiency or the love of sin, and believe every doctrine, and obey every precept, which he recommends and inculcates? Are we convinced that our state, by nature, is a state of ruin—that, by our own doings, we are unable to atone for our transgressions—and that Christ is our only hope and our only security? And do we relinquish all dependence on ourselves, and cordially and fully embrace Jesus, as the way, the truth, and the life,—trusting in his merits and mediation, for our present spiritual comfort, and for

our future and everlasting happiness? These are points of momentous consequence to be ascertained; because, without humility and faith, it is altogether impossible to obtain an interest in that great salvation, which the Redeemer died to purchase, and is now exalted to bestow.

But it will be of little or no avail, to acknowledge Jesus as our prophet and our priest, if we do not also submit to him as our king and legislator. He has issued laws for the government of his subjects; and to these laws we are bound, as Christians, to yield our obedience. It becomes us, then, in our self-examination, to see whether religion has a settled and commanding influence on our hearts and our conduct,—whether our faith in Christ constrains us to live soberly, righteously, and godlily,—whether, as pilgrims on earth, it leads us to guard against those pollutions around us, which would incommode and embitter our pilgrimage,—whether, as expectants of the heavenly inheritance, it renders us "steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And remembering that we must daily rise in the scale of moral excellence, let us inquire, Is our way in the Divine life progressive? Are we gradually "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord?" Are we with increasing vigour "press-

ing towards the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus?"

In no exercise whatever can we be more profitably engaged; and we must commence without delay this process of self-inspection. Under the divine blessing it will be the safe-guard of our souls; it will discover us to ourselves as we really are; it will shew us our wants and our danger; it will bring us to Christ, who alone is able to save us from destruction; and it will render us more cautious and watchful in our future lives.

III. On the Sabbath we must read the Scriptures, and other religious books, in our secret retirement.

The inspired volume contains the revealed will of Heaven; and is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* It unfolds to us the unity, perfections, and character of the Supreme Being,—points out to us our sinful state by nature, and our final destination beyond death and the grave,—acquaints us with a remedy, by which we may be recovered

* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

from degradation, misery, and ruin,—and specifies the manner in which that remedy is to be applied, so as to be effectual to the saving of our souls. Considering then its high and commanding authority, and the important object which it is intended to serve, should we not peruse it, to learn from it the truth as it is in Jesus, and to become wiser and better by the lessons which it teaches? Yes, certainly; for if we do not, we shall one day be called to a fearful reckoning for the neglect of so eminent and valuable a privilege.

Now, to gain the end for which the sacred records were given, we must read them with prayer to God, that we may be enabled to understand their genuine import. However acute our intellectual faculties may be, and however extensive our literary acquirements, yet it is only by the operating influence of divine grace that we obtain a proper discernment of the sublime mysteries of redemption, and discover in the Gospel the wisdom and the power of God unto salvation. Hence we find that the royal psalmist, sensible of the natural blindness of his own mind, and, unless irradiated by a beam from the Sun of Righteousness, its utter incompetency to apprehend the true meaning of the inspired word, besought the Lord to open his eyes, that he might behold won-

drous things out of the divine law."* In exploring therefore this heavenly mine, it becomes us, if we would succeed in our investigation, to supplicate the Holy Spirit, who searches the deep things of God, to unlock to us the treasures of spiritual knowledge, that, "beholding in them as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory,"† until we are finally made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

In reading the Scriptures, we must lay aside all undue partialities, and cherish an honest and ingenuous disposition; because without this our judgments will be in danger of being influenced by our passions and preconceived opinions. As the page of revelation contains many things revolting to our prejudices and corrupt affections, we must guard against the conclusions to which these would lead, and receive with meekness and simplicity "the engrafted word." If such a relinquishment of prepossessions be not made, every statement will be rendered subservient to the views we have previously adopted; and to accomplish this object, we will have recourse to strained analogies, to metaphors, and to allegories, or, if these

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* Psalm cxix. 18. † 2 Corinth. iii. 18.

will not serve the purpose, to interpolations of the text. It is thus that many, attached to the dogmas of a party, or actuated by a zeal not according to knowledge, "wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction."*

The Bible must be read with humility and reverence. If the Supreme Being has a rightful claim to the homage and obedience of his creatures, then surely, the laws which he has issued for the regulation of their conduct, ought to be held as sacred, and treated with becoming respect. From his decisions there lies no appeal; and every disclosure and declaration which he makes, must be unreservedly and implicitly received. The grace of God, from which salvation flows, is quite incompatible with that pride of heart which we naturally possess, and requires a willing and an unconditional surrender of the whole mind. Whatever exalts itself against the knowledge of God must be cast down; and every thought and every feeling brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. We must not open the inspired Volume with unwarrantable conceptions of the extent of human intellect,—holding up reason as the standard of religious belief, and determined to admit nothing as true, but what we

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* 2 Pet. iii. 16.

are able fully to comprehend. There are indeed many doctrines which, although clearly revealed, transcend our limited capacities; and of the possibility of which we are therefore incompetent judges. Such are the mode of the Divine Existence,—the manner of the Spirit's operation in the conversion of the soul,—the prescience of God and free agency of man,—and the resurrection of the same numerical body. But because these doctrines are inexplicable by our limited faculties, shall we, with bold assurance, pronounce them absurd and untenable? Shall we, forgetting that secret things belong unto the Lord, and affecting to be wise above what is written, assume the prerogative of scanning the mysteries of Heaven? Shall we dare to reduce the infinite and omniscient Jehovah to the level of our low and earthly conceptions? No; let us, who are but of yesterday, and know nothing, confess our ignorance, and with minds confiding in the veracity of God, humbly and teachably receive every statement and disclosure of divine Revelation.

It is necessary also that we read the Scriptures with care and attention. Having overcome that listlessness and love of ease, so congenial to the mind, we must, to acquire a clear and consistent view of sacred truth, advert to the particular design of the inspired writer, and to the general

scope of his narrative, doctrine, or reasoning. Passages that are obscure, we must compare with others more luminously expressed, when, from the relation in which they stand, they are obviously intended to establish the same truth. Mere glancing with the eye over a number of pages, or pronouncing with the lips the words which these contain, is not that mode of studying the law of God and charter of salvation which ought to be pursued. The mind also must be fixed on what is before us,—must perceive its import,—must revolve its practical bearings. Careless reading is but specious trifling,—reading which tends neither to inform the understanding, nor to improve the heart. We must exclude every object foreign to that which should engage our thoughts. "My son," says the Almighty by the mouth of Solomon, "if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding: yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."*

* Prov. ii. 1—5.

Again, we must read the word of God, so as to take home its lessons to our consciences, and to practise them in our lives. This is the great end which we should ever propose, in all our investigations into sacred truth; and if it is not attained, we can derive from the exercise no spiritual advantage whatever. As the testimonies of Jehovah are a transcript of his perfections, unfolding to us his will and our duty, we are bound, it is obvious, to make them "the men of our counsel," and to regulate our hearts and our conduct by their decisions. Do they exhibit to us the way to heaven and to happiness? In that way we must endeavour to go. And do they point out to us a fountain of Grace to refresh and support us amid the faintings of our pilgrimage? To that fountain we must repair, for every needful supply of strength and of consolation. Having, therefore, received of the Prophets, the Evangelists, and the Apostles, "how we ought to walk and to please God," let us study to promote the glory of his name, and to adorn the doctrines of our Lord and Saviour, by lives and conversations becoming the Gospel.

But other books of religion, which give a faithful exposition of our duty, and propound the most powerful motives for the discharge of our obligations, may also be read with much profit in

our Sabbatic retirement. There are many admirable publications of this description; yet, without particularizing any of them here, we would only remark that, in making a judicious selection, we must be regulated less by the elegance of the style in which they are written, than by the doctrinal statements which they contain, and the spirit of devotion which they breathe. It is not so much our business, to indulge in following out a curious speculation, on some controverted point, as to engage in what is of practical utility, and furnishes a channel of communication between our souls and God. These hallowed hours must be spent in preparing for that Sabbath of eternal rest which remains for the righteous in Christ Jesus in the world to come.

O how thankful should we be to God, for all the means of religious instruction with which he has favoured us! And how cheerfully should we avail ourselves of these, for enlarging our Christian views, for promoting our progress in holiness, and for comforting and supporting us amid the various trials of this mortal life. It is therefore an important inquiry, Do we enter our chamber on the Lord's day, and thus employ our time? Alas! is it not a melancholy fact, that this is a matter in which many feel little or no concern? Yes; there are those who

seldom or never open the Bible, to learn from it the will of God, and the way which leads to eternal happiness; and what apology can they offer, which will satisfy the omniscient Searcher of hearts, or stand the test of impartial examination? No reason can be assigned for this habitual neglect, but the decided aversion of the corrupt mind to the pure and self-denying requirements of the divine law. "And this," says our Lord, "is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*

Let us here put a case from ordinary life: Were a friend to leave you a property to be enjoyed on certain expressed conditions, would you not carefully and repeatedly peruse the deed by which it is conveyed, that you might make yourself acquainted with all the rights and provisions which it states and declares? Now, your divine Redeemer has bequeathed to you a spiritual and heavenly inheritance, infinitely superior, in value and duration, to any earthly possession; and he has made it over to you, on your compliance with the specified terms, by a solemn testament contained in the Scriptures of truth. And why is it that you do not act in this instance, as you

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* John iii. 19.

would do in the one supposed, when you have incomparably a greater interest at stake? It is just because you prefer the things that are seen and temporal, to those that are unseen and eternal,—because you pay no becoming regard to the will of God, or to your destiny beyond the grave. But, if you would not abandon yourselves to danger, like a vessel without rudder and compass, on the stormy element of the sea of life, be persuaded, attentively and frequently, to consult the chart of salvation, which will guide you in safety to the haven of undisturbed and never-ending repose; listen to the celestial voice which, at this moment, addresses to you the compassionate and friendly exhortation, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."* The brief space of our mortal existence is fast drawing to a close; "Now only is the accepted time—now is the day of salvation."† But,

IV.—LASTLY: On the Sabbath, we must engage in secret prayer.

This is, indeed, a duty which we ought to perform every day of the week, as it is intimately connected with our growth in grace, and our

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* Ephes. v. 14. † 2 Cor. vi. 2.

preparation for the eternal world. But it is more pacticularly incumbent on us, on that sacred season, which God has set apart for his immediate worship, and which he calls upon us to devote to the purposes of its high destination. In order that we may profit to the full extent, by the services of the sanctuary and the family, it should precede, and it should follow, these services.

In the Shorter Catechism of our church, prayer has well been defined, "An offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies." This is the nature and characteristic of all warrantable and acceptable addresses at the throne of divine grace. But, as in our public and domestic supplications, we are necessarily confined to such a generality of expression, as suits the common circumstances of all, for whom they are presented, and as every "heart knoweth its own bitterness,"* and its own grounds of obligation, it becomes us, individually and apart, to lift up our souls to Him who bids not the seed of Jacob to seek his face in vain. We have besetting sins to bewail, which we can-

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* Prov. xiv. 10.

not with propriety mention in the hearing of others; we have specific blessings to ask, which are fitted to the peculiarities of our own cases, and which, therefore, we should supplicate in our retirement; and we have a tribute of gratitude to render for special favours and singular deliverances, which it is better to render when there is no ear but that of God to listen. Accordingly, to this spiritual exercise, one and all of us are explicitly and authoritatively called. For what is the language of our Lord upon the subject? "When thou prayest," says he, "enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."*

Secret prayer is the natural breathing of the heaven-born soul. And, while it is inseparable from a state of grace, it not only prepares us for doing and for bearing the will of God, but places us, as it were, on the mount of vision, whence we have a view of the promised Canaan, and of "the everlasting hills," stretching away in the distant horizon. It was much valued, and much practised by the saints of old. We read of Jacob vow-

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* Matt. vi. 6.

ing to God at Bethel, and wrestling with him at Peniel,*—of David performing his devotions evening and morning, and at noon,†—of Daniel braving the danger of death, rather than relinquish so high a privilege,‡—and of the private supplications of Paul, and Peter, and Cornelius.§ And to these instances we may add the example of our Lord himself, who frequently retired to hold communion with his Heavenly Father.‖

Here then is our duty, clearly set before us; and do we on the Sabbath, and on all fit opportunities, cheerfully and devoutly perform it? If we do not, we have no reason to expect that our spiritual wants shall be supplied; for it is said that they only who ask, shall receive,—that they only who seek, shall find,—and that to them only who knock, it shall be opened. O let us not shut our eyes on our eternal interests—let us not float down the stream of life, heedless whither we are going; but let us, in dependence on the grace of God, while time is yet ours, attend to the things which belong to our everlasting peace.—This is what we will wish to have done, when we come to die: this is what will yield us comfort,

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* Gen. xxviii. 20. xxxii. 24, 30. † Psalm lv. 17.
‡ Dan. vi. § Acts ix. 11. x. 9, 30.
‖ Matt. xxiv. 23. xxvi. 36, *et alibi.*

when we enter the regions of eternity; this is what will brighten that crown of glory which we shall receive when we take possession of the inheritance of the saints in light.

In the appointment of prayer, there is an analogy to the ordinary procedure of Providence.—The prescriptions of the physician, to produce any salutary effect, must first be brought by the patient into actual contact with his wounds.—And the seeds of spring, before they shoot up and ripen into the rich luxuriance of harvest, must be cast into the ground, and be nourished by the genial influence of Heaven. In like manner, to enjoy that peace which passes understanding, and to reach that stature of perfect man in Christ Jesus, after which every christian is bound to aspire, mercy to pardon, and grace to help us, must engage our desires and prompt our petitions. We do not pray to inform God of our wants, as he "knoweth what things we have need of, before we ask him;"* but we pray because he has commanded us, and because he has constituted the right performance of this duty, the channel through which he conveys to our souls the necessary spiritual blessings. By maintaining an habitual intercourse with him, by con-

* Matt. vi. 8.

templating and exalting his Majesty and perfections, and by acknowledging our numerous transgressions, and weaknesses, and wants; we are more powerfully impressed with a conviction of our own dependence and obligations,—our minds are wrought into a deeper tone of humility and reverence,—we set a more watchful guard against all impurity of heart and of conduct,—and we see more clearly the value of the Redeemer's sacrifice, and the admirable adaptation of his character and offices to our circumstances.

Now let it not be imagined, as some would insinuate, that to follow during the Sabbath, that line of conduct which we have in this section endeavoured to delineate and enforce, would operate as an infringement on our christian liberty. For what is meant by christian liberty in its true and legitimate import? Not surely a release from the performance of moral and religious duties, but from the burden of the Jewish ritual, and the law of the decalogue, as *a covenant of works*; while it implies a simple and unreserved reliance on the grace of the Gospel, for our acceptance with God. As a *rule of life*, the fourth commandment is no less strictly binding on us than it was on the Jews; and in this sense, the obligation which it imposes can never be dispensed with, as long as the relation between the

creature and the Creator continues to subsist. The obvious language of Christianity is, that the Saviour died to redeem us, not merely from the guilt, but from the love, and practice, and dominion of sin,—that he gave himself for us, not that he might render us callous and indifferent to our spiritual interests, but that he might awaken in us a lively and zealous concern about the things which belong to our eternal peace. The faith, accordingly, which we are required to exercise, when we receive him as our "righteousness," must work by love, and purify the heart, and overcome the world. If without holiness, no man can see the Lord in mercy, we must employ the means which are appointed for promoting our progress in godliness, and our meetness for the bliss of immortality. And one of the most direct and powerful of these, is the devout and proper observance of the Lord's day.

SECTION III.

On the consistency of Works of Piety, Necessity, and Mercy, with the Sanctification of the Sabbath.

We have already seen that we are bound, by the peremptory and authoritative command of

Heaven, to desist, on this sacred season, from all the ordinary concerns and occupations of life; and that we must obey that command, not by spending our time in indolent repose, but by devoting it to the public, and domestic, and secret duties of religion. Having considered these duties in detail, and pointed out their nature, relations, and bearings, I shall now advert to some cases which form an exception to the general precept, and which may be distinguished into three classes, under the respective titles of works of piety, works of necessity, and works of mercy.

I. Works of *piety* are lawful on the Sabbath. By these, we mean such as have an immediate connexion with the devotional services of the sanctuary, or tend to the worship and glory of God. Under the law, however strict was the injunction to rest on that solemnity, the Jewish priests had then to engage in different laborious preparations. Besides the daily sacrifices, they had two additional lambs to kill, and flay, and wash, and quarter, before they presented them to the Lord, as burnt offerings; and they had to supply with fuel the fire which was kindled to consume them on the altar. As it was required that every male child should be circumcised on precisely the eighth day after its birth, they had frequently

to perform that rite on this sacred season ;* and it was their province also to blow the trumpets, which assembled the congregation for the public offices of religion.

Now, these operations were warranted by the circumstance, that they were not only indispensably necessary for the celebration of divine worship, but were pointed out and required by the express commandment of God. Hence we find that our Lord, in vindicating his conduct against the captious quibbling of his inveterate enemies, the Pharisees, for his departure from what they considered the strictness of the Sabbatic festival, appealed to their own allowed practice for a confutation of their frivolous objections. "Have ye not read in the law," said he, "how that on the Sabbath-day, the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?"† And as the priests were innocent in the respect, and for the reason just mentioned, so were likewise the people who infringed upon the literal rest in going to the Tabernacle, the Temple, or the Synagogue, to discharge the duties of public devotion.

But if it was lawful for the Jews to engage, on that holy day, in such toilsome performances as tended to the service of God, it is no less lawful

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* John vii. 23. † Matt. xii. 5.

for us to do things of a similar tendency. Though we are not indeed called upon to prepare and offer sacrifices of lambs, or other animals, in the sanctuary; yet, as it is our bounden duty there to present to God our united expressions of reverence, dependence, and gratitude,—by prayer, and praise, preaching, and hearing the Word,—the distance, we may have to travel for these purposes, is by no means to be viewed as a breach of the sacred institution. And the same consideration sanctions the propriety of ringing bells for bringing the people together, and of making arrangements for the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The bodily labour, in all these cases, is sanctified by the end for which it is employed, just as the gift of old was sanctified by the altar on which it was laid.*

The observations now made, may furnish us with a subject of important self-examination. In leaving our houses on the Sabbath, and repairing to the sanctuary of God, with what motives, or for what purpose, do we go thither? Is it to worship our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, by rendering to him, as his perfections and character require, a true and spiritual homage? Or

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* Matt. xxiii. 19.

is it merely to keep up the form, while we are strangers to the power of godliness, or to purchase, by a fancied meritorious service, the remission of our past offences, and a license for the future? We may deceive our fellow-men by an assumed appearance, and we may delude ourselves with vain and presumptuous hopes; but we cannot impose on the Omniscient Jehovah, who sees clearly, and estimates justly, the inmost feelings and intents of our souls. How seldom do we take this into serious consideration; and how often do we enter the courts of the Lord, without any proper impressions upon our minds, either of the majesty and attributes of that Being with whom we have to do, or of the necessity of having "truth in the inward parts," as the source and spring of all our acts of external devotion! O, let us then attend to the nature and objects of our religious privileges, that in waiting upon God in his ordinances, we may derive from them that improvement which they are so eminently fitted to impart!

II. Works of *necessity* are lawful on the season of sacred rest. That such works are permitted, we are assured on the written testimony of Heaven. Indeed, the very declaration, that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the

Sabbath,"* evidently sanctions the performance of these; inasmuch as it shews that this institution was originally intended for his profit, and that, whenever the rigid observance of it would, in any circumstances, operate to the manifest injury of his health, or of his property, he is not bound, by imperious duty, to comply with the literal injunction.

But let it be remarked, for the sake of preventing abuse, as the depravity of the human heart is ever ready to take advantage of the permission, that before a departure from the Sabbatic rest is, in any one instance, allowable, a plea of absolute necessity must be fairly and fully substantiated. Now, it will be proper to inquire, and we would press the inquiry on the serious attention of every reader, What is meant by *necessity* in its true and legitimate import? Let it be remembered, that this term, which is too frequently employed to justify a deviation from the direct duties of the day which God has consecrated to his service, denotes not that licentious liberty to which capricious inclination, or unhallowed pleasure, or worldly ambition, may lead; but that cogency of reasons which arises from circumstances over which we have no control, and

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* Mark ii. 27.

which we cannot resist, without sustaining an evident and irreparable loss. In all cases, therefore, where it can be admitted, it must be real, and not pretended,—it must flow from the providence of God, and not from our own desires and previous arrangements.

In the definition thus given, three simple principles are involved, which we would do well to keep constantly in view. *First*, Nothing is a work of necessity, which might have been provided against by ordinary care. Nor, *Secondly*, can any thing come under this designation, which may be deferred with safety to another day of the week. And, *Lastly*, the urgency of the matter must be so obvious, as not to afford to others, who may come to the knowledge of it, any encouragement to violate the sacred rest. By the application of these principles, any case of christian casuistry, in reference to this subject, may easily be solved. Without, therefore, attempting a formal enumeration of particulars, I shall rather bring a few to the test of the standard which I have here laid down.

Is, then, the *preparing of food* on the Sabbath a work of necessity? Yes, because whatever contributes to the health and sustenance of the body cannot be innocently neglected; and there are many articles of diet which, in certain circum-

stances, cannot well be made ready until they are about to be used. Nor does the language of Moses stand in opposition to this doctrine, when he says, "To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning."* From these words, we are not led directly to infer, that the Israelites were required to bake and seethe, on the *sixth* day, the whole of their double portion, so as to leave no part of that process to be gone through on the *seventh*. And even though we were confined to this inference, the command is clearly to be considered as referring, not to victuals in general, but simply to the manna, which was given them as a miraculous and temporary supply, in the wilderness of Arabia. Hence we see that our Lord defended, against the cavils of the captious Pharisees, the conduct of his disciples, who, in walking through a field, while going to or returning from the Synagogue, had plucked some ears of corn, and rubbed them in their hands, to satisfy the cravings of hunger. But let it not be imagined that this affords any encouragement to impose on domestics, the laborious and engrossing

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* Exod. xvi. 23.

occupation of the kitchen, in providing for the reception of company, on the season which God has consecrated for his service. Feasting of this description is a direct violation of its sanctity, and cannot be vindicated on any christian principle, in as much as it might be postponed, without injury or material inconvenience, to a future day.

Is the *kindling of a fire* in our houses, on the Sabbath, a work of necessity? This also falls within the list of exceptions to the literal rest. It is requisite, not only for preparing our food, but, in cold climates, for comforting our bodies, and fitting us for the service of God; so that we cannot neglect it without injury to our health, and obstruction to our spiritual exercises. True, it is said, in the book of Exodus, thirty-fifth chapter and third verse, "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations, on the Sabbath-day." Yet, from the statement in the preceding context, that such works as were permitted on the six days of the week, were unlawful on the seventh, we are led to conclude, that the fires here prohibited were those employed in mechanical pursuits, or in building the Tabernacle, which is immediately after described.

Is *self-defence*, or *running* from an enemy, on

the season of sacred rest, a work of necessity? Yes; for in this case the urgency, arising from danger, admits of no delay. The Jews, indeed, in consequence of the false glosses of the Pharisees, deemed it a crime either to fight or to flee on the Sabbath; but finding that adherence to such a tenet had exposed them to assault and to slaughter, they, in the time of the Maccabees, passed a decree, declaring that they would not in future submit on that day so passively to destruction.* The great law of nature points out this as a duty; and we see that though Jesus, in forewarning his disciples of the approaching siege of Jerusalem, enjoined them to "pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath-day, he never once hinted to them, that it was then unlawful for them to attempt their escape from the impending calamity.

Again: Is the *extinguishing* of devouring flames, on the Sabbath, a work of necessity? Of this there can be no doubt, when the tendency of these is considered. They threaten, if not immediately our lives themselves, at least, the very means of our subsistence in the world; and as, therefore, they cannot be allowed to rage, with-

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* 1 Macc. i.

out manifest and serious injury, prompt measures to suppress them are not only not forbidden, but are truly justifiable on that sacred rest.

All the instances now stated bear upon them the decided character of *necessity*, and, accordingly, do not come within the range of the general prohibition, "Thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates."* But let the same principles be now applied to some cases of an opposite description.

It has been a question often agitated, Whether, after the operations of the husbandman have been long suspended by what is termed unseasonable *rain*, it be not allowable to *sow*, or *gather in*, on the Sabbath, when that day is favourable for these important purposes? To this question we would answer, without hesitation, in the *negative*. For although the state of the weather be an event over which we have no control, yet, as from that event we are not warranted, in the face of the divine promise, "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease,"† to anticipate any disastrous result, our

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* Exod. xx. 10. † Gen. xi. 42.

labours in the field may safely be deferred to a future opportunity.

Far less can it be deemed a work of necessity, to *print* and *circulate* newspapers, on the season which God has consecrated for his service. This is a practice which offers the most daring outrage to the commandment and authority of the Supreme Jehovah. Operating by the prospect of gain, or the fear of giving offence, it detains numbers from the House of God, and from the performance of those religious duties, which are so essentially connected with their everlasting welfare. And from the inducements which it holds out to the careless and unthinking, during the languor and irksomeness of their Sabbatic hours, it tends, more than almost any thing else, to pour the tide of infidelity and irreligion, with a desolating sway over the land. In London alone, there are about *twenty* different papers published every Lord's day; though not a plea, which will bear the test of impartial examination, can be urged in support of so unhallowed and mischievous a commerce. Hence it is incumbent on every Christian, and every well-wisher to the best interests of society, to set his face against it, and to withhold from it the sanction of his encouragement.

Nor is *travelling*, on the Sabbath, for the despatch of business, a work of necessity; in as much as it might have been performed on the day preceding, or might be deferred to the day following. Wantonly to infringe on the sacred rest, for the purpose of promoting our temporal advantage, however common may be the practice among commercial economists, is, to say the least of it, an expression of our discontent with the six days, which God has given us for the management of our earthly concerns, and an avowal of a preference for the things of time over those of eternity, and of a greater attachment to the service of Mammon than to that of the Living God. And where is the policy of all this, even in a worldly point of view? Surely, if we believe in the existence and superintending providence of the Deity, we must allow that the way to enjoy his blessing on our endeavours, is not to violate his positive injunctions, but, through the operation of his grace, cheerfully and uniformly to obey his laws.

We may hold out a work of necessity, in violating the Sabbatic rest,—for we are supposing that we profess some respect for that holy institution,—but still it may be asked, What is the nature and origin of that necessity which we plead? Is it such as we, by no foresight, or pre-

vious arrangements, could have prevented? Or, even when real and independent of our agency, is it to us a subject of regret, and not of delightful enjoyment? This we should seriously ponder, so as to ascertain the principles on which we act, —so as to see whether our conduct be consistent with a due regard to the laws of God, and with an enlightened and prudent concern for our eternal interests. If we have decided in our own minds, that the gain of the whole world is no sufficient compensation for the ruin of the soul,—if we have experienced the operation of divine grace, and imbibed the spirit of Christianity,—if we have been so changed, as to be able in truth to say, Whom, Lord, have I in heaven but thee, and there is nothing in all the earth that I desire in comparison of thee; then we will cheerfully embrace every opportunity of worshipping our Creator and Redeemer,—then we will count every thing but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, the Lord,—then we will allow no temporal pleasures and pursuits to interfere with the glory of God, and our own spiritual welfare beyond death and the grave.

III. In the third and last place; works of *mercy and beneficence* are also permitted on the Sabbath.

We know, on the highest authority, that "it is lawful to do good on that holy day."* Indeed no season is so peculiarly adapted to awaken in our breasts emotions of generosity and kindness. For when we think, as it must lead us to think, of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich,"† we cannot surely shut up our bowels of compassion against any of our fellow-men, and especially our fellow-christians, in distress. To do so would be a dereliction of christian principle, and a withholding of that love which is the fulfilling of the law, and the discriminating badge of our christian discipleship.

On the Sabbath, accordingly, it is allowable for the physician and the surgeon to exercise the arts of their profession; and for the friends of the sick to watch in the chamber of affliction. In this case, as in all others, we cannot follow a better example than that of our blessed Redeemer, who frequently healed bodily disorders on this season of sacred repose. It was then he cured the man with the withered hand;‡ it was then he cured the man who had a dropsical complaint;§ it was

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* Mark iii. 4. Luke vi. 9.
† 2 Corinth. viii. 9.
‡ Matt. xii. 13.
§ Luke xiv. 2—4.

then he cured the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda;* it was then he cured the man who was blind from his birth;† it was then he cured the woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years.‡

To attend to the interests of the poor is an act of beneficence, which it is proper to perform on the Sabbath. For what is the language of the Apostle to the Corinthians, sixteenth chapter, first and second verses, in reference to this subject? "Now," says he, "concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Here then we see our warrant for making charitable contributions on the season of sacred rest; and, at the same time, the extent to which we must give,—an extent to be measured, not by a narrow selfishness which is too apt to influence, but by that ability with which Divine Providence has endowed us.

Nay, care of our cattle, such as *supplying* them with provender, and *leading* them out to water, comes within the list of exceptions under

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* John v. 8—10. † ix. 1—16. ‡ Luke xiv. 4.

the head of mercy. Even the Jews did not neglect them on the Sabbath, however scrupulously rigid they were, in other respects, in the observance of that day. And we learn that our Lord, in a conference with the Pharasees, gives this practice the sanction of his approval.*

But do we embrace the opportunity which the Lord's day affords us, to perform works of mercy and beneficence? Or do we, notwithstanding, look with a cold and callous aspect on the poor and the distressed? If we feel grateful, as we ought, for redemption from sin and misery, which that day is intended to commemorate, we will, in the due observance of it, cultivate and exercise that "charity which" an Apostle emphatically denominates "the bond of perfectness;"† we will "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us."‡ Let us therefore search our hearts, and try our ways; and in the strength of Divine grace, study more and more to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the laws of the living God.

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* Luke xiii. 15. † Col. iii. 14. ‡ Ephes. v. 2.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE ADVANTAGES WHICH RESULT FROM KEEPING THE SABBATH HOLY.

WE are told on the highest authority, that "the Sabbath was made for man," or for the promotion of his interests; and if this was a leading object in its original institution, we may be assured that the devout and proper observance of it will be attended with the happiest consequences. These may be considered under the following heads: *First*, The refreshment of the body; *Secondly*, The prevention of irreligion and infidelity; *Thirdly*, The acceleration of our progress in holiness; *Fourthly*, The enjoyment of the Divine favour; and, *Lastly*, The increase of our consolations in the pilgrimage of life.

SECTION I.

The Sanctification of the Sabbath affords a Refreshment to the Body.

ALTHOUGH this be not the primary purpose, for which that day was originally appointed, yet, in adverting to the blessings with which it is accompanied, such an advantage should not be wholly overlooked. The labouring classes of society compose the great majority of our race; and without entering into any physiological disquisition on the degree and frequency of relaxation, requisite for repairing that waste of animal spirits which habitual toil produces, it may safely be maintained, that continuous and incessant exertion would soon undermine the constitution, and shorten the term of mortal existence.

Now, to persons who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, the stated return of a day which brings along with it a suspension from work, and a rest from bodily toil, must, in no small degree, be welcome and gratifying. Amid the fatigues of the week, with what pleasure must they anticipate that hallowed repose; and how powerfully must such an anticipation tend to cheer and support them! The rigorous exac-

tions of a task-master, or the urgency of circumstances, when they work on their own account, may oblige them to make efforts, which their strength could not sustain, but for the seasonable respite which the Sabbath affords. And, in this view, it is an institution productive of a blessing, which they could not otherwise experience, and invested with a value which they cannot too thankfully acknowledge.

But, if the appointment of this public rest be attended with so great an advantage to the operative classes of society, where is the benevolence or philanthropy of the man, who would rob them of a provision thus necessary and refreshing? To break in upon the sacredness of the Sabbath, by obliging domestics and servants needlessly to toil on that day, is unfeelingly to abridge their enjoyments, and to lay upon their shoulders a burden, which the supreme Lord of all never intended they should bear. Supposing the practice to become general, of devoting this holy season to these occupations which are lawful on other days, What, we would ask, would they gain by the change? It would not, in the end, enrich them with one fraction of additional wages. For, as there would, of necessity, be a greater quantity of work performed, there would also be a proportionable diminution of the price

that was paid for it. And thus, while they were doomed to about *two months* more labour in the course of the year, they would derive no profit whatever from that increase of exertion.

Let the Sabbath, then, be regarded as a salutary institution; and let it never be infringed upon for the purpose of promoting our worldly views. That omniscient Being, by whom it was appointed, knows best what is for the interests of his creatures; and it becomes not short-sighted man, whose breath is in his nostrils, to contravene and oppose his enactments. If we despise his mercies, and set our faces against his laws, we must just submit to the consequences of our rebellion and our crimes. Assuredly, our disobedience cannot be unprofitable to him, for it can neither deprive him of his sovereignty, nor impair his happiness. But as assuredly, from its discovering a spirit of hostility against the power which formed us, and which daily upholds us, he will punish our enmity and ingratitude, by our exclusion from his presence, and our consignment to the society of the wretched in the regions of utter darkness for ever.

SECTION II.

The Sanctification of the Sabbath, a powerful Preventive of Infidelity and Irreligion.

To promote the spiritual interests of our race, is the great object which that weekly festival has in view. And, indeed, so directly does it tend to the accomplishment of that object, that it may be appropriately denominated the *guarantee*, or safeguard, of obedience to the divine statutes. From the place which the law of its institution holds in the sacred code—from its standing in the very centre of the decalogue, as having an equal relation to all its parts, it may be considered as that bond of union which lends force and efficiency to the whole, or as that point of observation which, by giving prominence to our duty, impresses it the more deeply on the mind.

Were it not for the regular return of the Lord's day, and the devotional services in which we then engage, that attachment to the world, or thirst for secular gain, which reigns so predominantly in our corrupted nature, would soon obliterate from the tablet of our hearts, every good and religious impression, and extinguish

all concern about eternity, and its awful realities. Yes; amid the engrossments of temporal pursuits, or the hurry and bustle of active life, the welfare of the immortal soul would be forgotten, and the prime consideration would be, "What we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed." We see, that during the six days allowed for working, the great majority of mankind, immersed, as they are, in the business of the world, and devoted, as they are, to its pleasures and frivolities, have seldom or never a moment to spare, for thinking of God—contemplating his perfections—reading his word—and calling on his name. And did not the sacred rest intervene, and put a suspension on these employments, the consequences would be, the gradual withdrawment of all concern about our future destination, and the progressive secularization of our affections, until we lost sight altogether of the "one thing needful," and lived as thoughtlessly as if we had no path of holiness presented to us, and no account to render in before the tribunal of our impartial Judge.

It has ever been found, and, from the very nature of the case, it ever will be found, that the sanctification of the Sabbath, and the prosperity of vital godliness, have a mutual and an influential relation. This is true, whether we consider

the fact in respect of nations, of families, or of individuals. If we can point to a country, where that sacred institution is contemptuously and systematically profaned, in that country we shall see infidelity stalking abroad with the most frontless assurance, and spreading the veil of oblivion over the destinies of man beyond death and the grave. What, for instance, is the state of religion in France, whose mock-philosophizing sons, during their revolutionary frenzy, endeavoured to banish the very remembrance of that holy festival from the land. There, even to this day, it has little more than a local habitation and a name. And the flood of impiety, which has overspread and desolated that fair portion of the earth, may justly be ascribed to a marked disregard for the Sabbath, while the profanation of that day, in consequence of an action and reaction, may also be attributed, in no small degree, to the prevalence of ungodly and unhallowed principle.

The same result is observed when we turn our attention to *families* where the Sabbath is scarcely distinguished from the other days of the week, except by that mere cessation from ordinary business, to which they are obliged by a sense of decency, or a deference to the laws of society. Are these the families which are, in

any measure, impressed with the knowledge and the love of divine things? Are these the families in which the fear and the worship of God are maintained? Are these the families which live under the powers of the coming world, and on which "holiness unto the Lord" is inscribed in characters that can at all be deciphered? No! there we find a melancholy unconcern about the disclosures of Revelation—an utter aversion to practical godliness—an awful blindness to their interests beyond this short span of their mortal existence.

But let us also see the effects of Sabbath profanation on *individuals*. It may be laid down as an indisputable maxim, that a man's piety is in proportion to his observance of the Lord's day. For if he pollutes that day, by frustrating, as far as he himself is concerned, the object of its appointment,—if he calls it not a delight, forbearing to do his own ways, to find his own pleasures, or to speak his own words,—if he spends it not in communion with God, in the cultivation of religious principles, and in preparing for that eternity which awaits him; then it is a clear and decisive proof that he sets not the Almighty before his eyes,—that he is not awed by the sanctions of Heaven's authority,—and that he has no scruple to transgress the divine statutes, whenever, and

in what way soever, his inclination or his convenience prompts. Add to this, that the violation of the sacred rest opens a flood-gate, for the admission of every evil into the mind. It strengthens the habits of iniquity; and, from its demoralizing tendency, leads to the perpetration of the most daring and revolting crimes. Yes, consult the experience of the unhappy person who has forfeited his life to the laws of his country, and he will tell you with tears of the bitterest lamentation, that his career of wickedness began with his breaking the Sabbath, and deserting his God.

When, on the contrary, this holy season is devoted to the end for which it was instituted, the religious exercises in which we engage, by giving a prominency to the doctrines and duties of christianity, contribute to keep alive upon the mind a sense of the obligations and responsibility, under which we are laid. We cannot statedly spend a day in meditation on the character of God,—in reading and hearing his word,—in praising him for his providential and redeeming goodness, and in praying for the enlightening and purifying influences of his spirit; without having our understandings and our hearts improved, and forming a resolution, in dependence on his promised aid, to serve him better than we have hitherto done,—to keep his commandments,

his statutes, and his laws. Nay, we cannot contemplate what his Eternal Son, Christ Jesus, in his unparalleled condescension, has done for our ruined race,—we cannot see him relinquishing the bosom of the Father, and willingly submitting to indignities, and sufferings, and death, to "redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;"* without feeling his love "constrain us henceforth to live not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again."† Thus, as an Apostle expresses it, "beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory."‡

The influence of duly observing the Sabbath, on the prosperity of religion, is beyond calculation important. It is the instrument by which the most salutary and lasting impressions are produced. It is the barrier raised by the wisdom of Heaven, for stemming the tide of impiety, which would otherwise deluge the land. It is the arm which places a safeguard around the divine law, and which gives weight and efficiency to all its requirements. Profane this day, and you run, with accelerated progress, in the paths of sin and

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* Tit. ii. 14. † 2 Corin. v. 14, 15. ‡ Ibid. iii. 18.

ruin. Keep it holy, and you grow in grace, and ripen for the bliss of immortality.

O how grateful then should we be for such an institution! If we have any regard for the best interests of the community in which we live,—if we have any wish for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth—if we have any concern for the welfare of our never-dying souls; we will hail it as one of the greatest blessings which God in his bounty ever bestowed upon our race. And is this the view in which we actually consider it? Or is our conduct consistent with our sense of its value and importance? We cannot verify our convictions and our thankfulness in any other way, but by devoting it to the end, for which it was appointed by our Maker and our Judge.

Did we properly observe the Sabbath, acting up to the spirit and intendment of its institution, and, in our respective spheres, using our influence with others, for the same great purpose, we should soon see thousands, who are at present its practical enemies, flocking around the standard of the cross, and swearing allegiance to the Saviour of mankind. We should see introduced into the state of society a reformation, which no human enactments could accomplish,—we should see not only a general respect for religion, but a

people " seeking the Lord God of their fathers, and walking in his commandments." Christians are destined to be *lights* in the world; and here is a call upon one and all of us, to hallow the Lord's day, so that the evil and unthinking around us, may, by our example, be led to glorify our Father in heaven.

We may pour forth the most pathetic lamentations over the prevalence of irreligion and infidelity; and we may lift up our warning voice, to point out their dismal and eternal consequences. But what will all this avail, if we shew, by our lives, that we do not believe in christianity as a practical system, or that we disregard the high sanctions, by which its duties are enforced?—The ungodly, who are glad of any excuse, will not fail to compare our profession with our conduct; and, considering practice as the best exposition of principle, will set us down as not a whit better than themselves. We may think and say of ourselves what we please; still the truth is immutable, that " a tree is known by its fruit," and that " faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."* If then we would not incur the guilt of confirming others in their iniquity,—if we would live as christians, and act as good mem-

* James ii. 17.

bers of society, let us keep the Sabbath holy, not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasures, nor speaking our own words.

SECTION III.

The tendency of the due Observance of the Sabbath to promote our Progress in Holiness, and our Meetness for Heaven.

THE subject of this section is nearly allied to that of the preceding one; but it is of such importance as to merit a separate illustration in this place. For though we may not repudiate the faith of the Gospel, nor live in avowed neglect of its ordinances, still we may make no proper advancement "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* Now the Sabbath, besides operating as a preventive of infidelity and irreligion, operates also as a direct means of preparing us for that state of heavenly rest in which holiness and bliss for ever reign.

Faithfulness in the service of God redounds to our own spiritual advantage; and if we pay a conscientious regard to the season of sacred repose, or keep it in the manner positively required, we

* Phil. iii. 14.

shall "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* From the opportunities of religious instruction which it affords us, and the devotional exercises in which it calls us to engage, it will stimulate and strengthen us in the path of duty, and render our attainments in godliness an object of greater prominence in the pilgrimage of life.

By sanctifying the Sabbath, in submission to the authority of God, we by this act recognise and confess our obligations to obey all the injunctions which he has given us, for the regulation of our conduct. For the same principle of faith which leads us to comply with his requisitions in *one* case, will assuredly lead us to comply with them in *every* other. Indeed, the very employment of that holy rest in reading and hearing the word,—in prayer and praise,—in devout meditation and self-inspection, are the ordinary channels through which divine grace is communicated,—that grace which illumines and purifies our souls, and which trains us up, by progressive improvement, for the inheritance of the saints in light. If this be the day, on which especially God has commanded us to seek his face; then it is the day, on which especially his favour

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* 2 Peter iii. 18.

is to be obtained,—a truth which is intimated to us, even by his *blessing* that day, when he first set it apart for his service, and by his subsequently signalizing it by the miraculous *out-pouring* of his spirit on the church assembled at Jerusalem, on the feast of Pentecost.

When we keep the Sabbath holy, our faith in God's declarations and promises is increased, by the very attention we give to the evidence which accompanies his word, and to the suitableness of the provision which he has made for our spiritual wants. Our love to him is animated, by reviewing the many bounties which he has bestowed upon us for our support and comfort, and by meditating on the blessings of that great salvation which he has accomplished by the sufferings and death of his own Son,—blessings which extend through eternity, and which fill the soul with unspeakable delight. And our purposes of obedience to his laws are confirmed, by considering the obligations under which we are laid, and the indispensable necessity of holiness, in order to participate in future felicity. Yes, the deep and vivid impressions which every *seventh* day, thus spent, produces and continues on the mind, operate as powerful auxiliaries to religious principle. With such impressions, we are the better prepared for entering on the secular business of the

week, without losing sight of our responsibility to Heaven, and the promotion of our immortal interests. Their direct tendency, amid the temptations with which we are surrounded, is to render us "steadfast and unmoveable" in our allegiance to God, and more and more successful in the discharge of our duty, and in the advancement of our meetness for celestial bliss.

What an imperious call then do these considerations address to us, to keep holy the Sabbath of the Lord! Assuredly, to disregard that call is to prefer not only evil to good, in the present life; but darkness to light, and misery to happiness, beyond death and the grave. And is it possible that any who believe the divine declarations, or who feel a concern about their welfare in the world to come, can wantonly and habitually profane the day which God has sanctified, and which, when duly observed, is accompanied with so many and important blessings? If we are obstinate and disobedient, how shall we answer for the opportunities we have neglected, and the privileges we have abused! The hour-glass of life is running on apace, and will soon be exhausted. Every returning Sabbath brings us *seven* days nearer to eternity; and accordingly cuts off so much of the short term allowed us, for working out our salvation in the strength of the Lord, and

for making our calling and election sure. O let us, while the accepted time continues, and the door of mercy is yet open, devote, with scrupulous fidelity, the Lord's day to its appointed purpose; so that in the end we may be fitted for the enjoyment of happiness, in that state of being which is immutable and everlasting.

SECTION IV.

The Sanctification of the Sabbath, connected with our enjoyment of the Divine Favour.

OBEDIENCE to the laws of Heaven, proceeding from principles of faith and of love, must ever be an object of complacency to God. As he is the source of all excellence, and the author of every good and perfect gift, he cannot but be pleased with such a disposition and character, as are formed and matured by the operation of his grace. Of this he himself has given us the most explicit assurance. "If," says he, "ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine."* "I am

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* Exod. xix. 5.

the Lord,—shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."*

On the observance of that rest, in particular, which God has enjoined by a specific law, he bestows his high approbation. "Blessed," he declares, "is the man that doth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil."† A devout regard to this holy institution has a direct and practical bearing on all the other precepts of the decalogue, and furnishes an unequivocal proof of the endearing relation in which we stand to God, as our sovereign, our protector, and our friend. Surrounding us with his favour, as with a shield, he, to use the figurative language of prophecy, "causes us to ride on the high places of the earth, and feeds us with the heritage of Jacob."‡ To this truth every genuine and consistent christian can bear ample and decided testimony. Even in a *secular* point of view it is indisputable. And the declaration of Sir Matthew Hale, in a letter to his grand-children, "That always, the more closely he applied himself to the duties of the Lord's day, the more happy and successful were

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* Exod. xx. 6. † Isaiah lvi. 2. ‡ Ibid lvii. 14.

his business and employments of the week following,"* is verified in the experience of every one, who pays an equal attention to the ways of divine providence.

But if the sanctification of the Sabbath be thus attended with the approbation of God, the profanation of it is as certainly attended with his displeasure. For this sin, the children of Israel were doomed to wander and to perish in the wilderness of Arabia: "I would not bring them," says the Almighty, "into the land which I had given them, because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my Sabbaths."† It is likewise recorded that a man, for presumptuously violating the sanctity of that day, was ordered to be stoned to death,‡—that for this crime, among others, the Jews were carried away captive into Babylon,§—and that, for the same impiety, Jerusalem was given over to be besieged, and consumed with fire.‖ Many dreadful threatenings against such conduct are contained in the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy, to which the reader is referred.

Indeed, the moral administration of God, in

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* See the Christian Observer for 1813, page 16.

† Ezek. xx. 15, 16. ‡ Num. xv. 32—36.

§ Neh. xiii. 18. ‖ Jer. xvii. 27. Lam. iv. 11.

every succeeding age, furnishes evident proofs of his indignation against those who profane the Sabbath. Not to mention the signal judgments with which he has sometimes visited them, sweeping them away in a moment, in the midst of their sinful career; it is a notorious fact, that such is the demoralizing influence of this profanation, that persons habitually guilty of it have, not unfrequently, been left to commit crimes against the laws of society which have brought them to an ignominious and untimely end. And if we advert to the scourge which, not many years since, passed with desolating sway along the theatre of Europe, where the Sabbatic rest is scarcely at all regarded; or if we revert to what, in times past, has happened in our own land, where that rest has been no less openly violated,* we cannot but come to the conclusion, that a country's prosperity is in proportion to its observance of that sacred institution. As God is supreme ruler over all, he will assuredly, in one way or another, avenge the wanton transgression of his statutes.

You, reader, may profess to be a christian; and if you *are* what your profession indicates, you must evince your principles by your prac-

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* Note L.

tice. On every ground of reason and religion, you must admit your responsibility to the Creator and Judge of the universe; and surely it would be presumption and folly, to expect his favour, while you rebel against his government, and trample under foot the day, which he has consecrated for his immediate service. You cannot mock him, nor elude the eye of his omniscience; and neither, when you provoke him to wrath by your disobedience, can you escape his fiery indignation. Nay, "though hand should join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished."* And knowing this, see that, in dependence on divine grace, you learn to keep the Sabbath holy; and that, through an operative faith in the merits and mediation of Christ, you seek to enjoy the "loving-kindness of God, which is better than life."†

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* Prov. xi. 21. † Psalm lxiii. 3.

SECTION V.

The Sanctification of the Sabbath a source of the richest Consolation in the Pilgrimage of Life.

In the present world, the christian is exposed to various trials, which are apt to press upon his spirits, and to unnerve his exertions. From the power of remaining corruption within him,—for it is never wholly subdued while he continues on earth,—he is sometimes ready to exclaim with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* And, from the temptations and distresses which assail him from without, arising from the relations and circumstances in which he is placed, he may be led, at an unguarded moment, to sin against God, by yielding to the one, or repining at the other.

Now, in these cases, religion alone can administer relief, by reminding us that "the Lord will never cut off his people, nor forsake his inheritance;" that he will "strengthen them, yea, will help them, yea, will uphold them with the right hand of his righteousness;" "that he who hath begun a good work in them will perform it until

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* Rom. vii. 24.

the day of Jesus Christ."* But it is especially on the season which he has consecrated for his immediate service, that the springs of consolation are opened, and the divine promises exhibited, explained, and applied. Yes, by the devotional exercises in which we then engage, our hopes are brightened,—our confidence increased,—and our souls replenished and refreshed. The views set before us of the heavenly Canaan, our meditations on the glory to be revealed, and the intercourse we hold with the Father of our spirits, combine to cheer and support us amid the trials of our pilgrimage, and stimulate us with renovated zeal and vigour to perform the duties, and to prosecute the journey of life.

Again, the sanctification of the Sabbath prepares us for looking with comfort on the approach of death. For if we keep that day as we ought, we are not only regaled with the assurance, that beyond the confines of time, "there remaineth a rest for the people of God;"† but are convinced that, having laid hold on the hope set before us, and withdrawn our affections from earthly objects, "for us to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."‡ And with

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* Psalm xciv. 14. Isaiah xli. 10. Phil. i. 6.

† Heb. iv. 9. ‡ 2 Corin. v. 8.

this conviction, we can contemplate, without regret, our departure from a world which faith has enabled us to overcome, and from which our hearts have been already abstracted.

But, O, how different is it with those who wantonly and habitually disregard the Sabbatic institution—who are so devoted to the gains, the amusements, and the pleasures of this passing scene, that they have not *one* day in *seven* to spare for the worship of Him who made them, and on whom they constantly depend for life, and breath, and every enjoyment! When the hour which terminates their connexion with the land of the living arrives,—for, however reluctantly, they must go the way whence they shall not return,—awful and overwhelming is the thought, that they part for ever with the very things, on which they had placed the whole of their happiness; and the more especially, since they have before them an incensed God, and an undone eternity!

Reader, be exhorted to consider, ere it be too late, the things which belong to your everlasting peace. The world may now engage your exclusive attention; but its fashion passeth away! Sinful pleasures may now be the objects of your supreme regard; but the period is coming when these shall be of no avail! The

doctrine of reconciliation, which is sounded in your ears, may now be despised; but when you cross the barriers of time, that sound shall never more be heard! Be up then and doing. In the use of those means of grace, which God has mercifully appointed, endeavour to live as becomes his peculiar people. Keep the Sabbath of the Lord with fidelity and delight, so that when this mortal shall put on immortality, you may enter into that rest which awaits the righteous in the regions of bliss.

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Note A, Page 7.

Dr Paley, in his Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, following the steps of Heylin and others who oppose the doctrine here advanced, says, in allusion to Genesis ii. 3, that "the order of connexion, and not the order of time, introduced the mention of the Sabbath in the history of the subject which it was ordained to commemorate." Now this sweeping assertion, which he has not supported by any thing like proof, takes for granted that Moses drew up his account of Creation after the giving of the law. But where, it may be asked, is the evidence that Moses wrote the book of Genesis subsequently to the transactions at Sinai? None can ever be produced; and it may be added, that even supposing it had been penned, not while he was in Median, attending the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, but while he was in the wilderness of Arabia, conducting the children of Israel towards the Holy Land, still the concession would by no means evince that the verse in ques-

tion was inserted by way of *anticipation*, or in reference to what is said concerning the sacred rest in the sixteenth and twentieth chapters of Exodus. The truth is, that as this point is wrapped in a veil of deep obscurity, the circumstance of time cannot be brought forward as an argument on either side.

It is doubtless a bad sign of a theory when it is founded on mere assumption. And since the above assertion rests on nothing else, why not allow the words of the sacred historian their natural and obvious meaning? In our theological speculations we should never lend ourselves to a cause, or maintain an opinion, which is clearly contradicted by every canon of fair and consistent interpretation. "Some," says the late judicious Dean of Carlisle, in his sermons recently given to the public—"some have *fancied* that this institution was not to have its effect from the beginning, but that it was delivered only in anticipation, as it were, of the Jewish Sabbath, published by Moses a long time afterwards. But I may well denominate such a notion by the name of *fancy*, for there is not a syllable said to give countenance to it. And I could just as soon believe that the world was not created according to the Bible narrative, or that the sun did not shine as soon as it was made, as that the seventh day was not sanctified for the use of man. From the moment that there was a man upon earth, it was the will of God that a seventh part of his time should be immediately consecrated to his service."

Note B, Page 14.

The words to which this note refers are in the original וידי מקץ ימים, denoting literally, "And it was at the end of days." But what precise period they are meant to designate, the context furnishes us with no sufficient data by which to determine. We must therefore have recourse to such considerations, connected with the history of the world in those early ages, as may suggest their most probable acceptation. And if the first mode of computing time was undoubtedly by weeks, arising from the order of God's procedure at the creation, namely, his working six days, and resting on the seventh, it seems most likely that the expression, "It was at the end of days," points to the last of the hebdomadal cycle; and the more especially as it is extremely uncertain whether any other division of time yet existed. In corroboration of this statement, it may be observed, that the patriarchs had altars and sacrifices, the evident indications of a public worship, which they must have statedly performed. Why then, should it not be admitted that the offerings of Cain and Abel were made on the seventh day of the week, which God had blessed and sanctified when he rested from the work of his hands?

"The noun קץ, it is certain," says Dr Kennicott, signifies the extremity by which any continued quantity is separated; and when applied to time, the conclusion of so much time as the word adjoined to it specifies. And therefore *Fagius*, commenting on this place, tells us—It

seems entirely rational, that by this phrase, *the end of days*, be understood some certain and appointed time, on which they met for the worship of God; for there was always, even before the law, an order in the church of God, by the means of distinguished times: and this opinion, *says he*, is confirmed by the word קץ, which does not simply signify *an end*, but *an end certain, precise, and determinate*.

The point then now is—What determinate portion of time is meant by the word ימים days; and it seems necessary that it should here signify either a *week* or a *year*. The latter is the opinion mostly, I believe, indulged; though, perhaps, without the greatest reason, as may appear from the following considerations.

'Tis plain that the historian gives these as *his own* words; and therefore had he intended to signify—*at the end of the year*, he probably would not have used the word ימים *days*, but שנה *a year*, which he so frequently uses in the very next chapter, and which is used by God himself, Genesis xvii. 21. Or he would have used that other phrase בצאת שנה *in the end of the year*, which we meet with in Exod. xxiii. 16. But what may be urged with greater force, the very phrase מקץ שבה is used by this same author in Exod xii. 14. Wherefore his not using either of these expressions, especially the latter, but expressing himself by the former, seems to prove the one chosen in opposition to the others.

Besides, I don't find that the very phrase מקץ ימים signifies *at the end of the year* any where in the Bible; it occurs indeed but in one other place, as in the text here

disputed, and that is in 1 Kings xvii. 7; and there is no possible reason for confining the expression to *a year* in that place. Wherefore we may conclude, with the learned *Gussetius*,—that neither is there any reason why we should think a *year* intended in this place: for, *says he*, on the contrary rather, the revolution or course of the *year* will scarce agree with the affair in hand; for if you should begin the year from the month Tisri, those oblations would have been *too late*, and if you begin with Nisan, they had been *too soon*, there not being at that time fruits to offer."—Kennicott's Two Dissertations. Octavo, 2d edit. p. 178, &c.

Note C, Page 18.

That the memory of the creation of all things in six days, and of God's resting on the seventh, was preserved and honoured from the earliest ages among the Greeks and the Italians, we have the testimony of Josephus, Philo, Tibullus, Lucian, and Clement of Alexandria. And that the Celtæ, the Sclavi, the Indians, and the Egyptians, distinguished their time into weeks, we learn from Philostratus, Dion Cassius, Justin Martyr, Helmoldus, and the ancient Hames of the days. See Grotius De Veritati Religionis Christianæ, Lib. 1, with his notes on the place.

For this agreement among men of all nations, from the remotest period, no other reason can be given but the one assigned by Moses in his history of the creation.

Undoubtedly the mode of counting by hebdomadal cycles was introduced wherever the human race spread, after their dispersion at Babel; and though the Greeks and Romans distinguished the days of the week by the names of the seven planets, yet these names were first applied to them by the Chaldean and Egyptian astrologers, long after the practice of computing by such septenary revolutions had been observed. For farther information on this subject, consult Riveti Prelectiones, in cap. xx. Exod. 2d edit. p. 132, &c. Kennicott's Two Dissertations, p. 160—165; and Owen on the Hebrews, Exercitation xxxvi. § 16, 2d edit.

Note D, Page 18.

The following testimonies evidently shew that the seventh day was deemed sacred among the ancient heathens:

Homer says,

Ἑβδομον ἡμαρ ἔην, καὶ τῳ τετελεστο ἁπαντα.

"It was the seventh day on which all things were perfected."

Ἑβδοματη δ' ηπειτα κατηλυθεν ἱερον ἡμαρ.

"Then came the seventh day, which is sacred."

Callimachus says,

Εβδοματῃ δ' ηοῖ καὶ ὁι τετυκοντο ἁπαντα.

"All things were made on the seventh day."

Ἑβδοματη δ' ἐην, και ὁι ετετυκτο ἁπαντα.

"It was the seventh day on which all things were made."

Linus says,

Ἑβδοματη δ' ἠοῖ τετελεσμενα παντα τετυκται.

"On the seventh day all things were finished."

Ἑβδομη ειν αγαθοις, και ἑβδομη εστι γενεθλη
Ἑβδομη εν πρωτοισι, και ἑβδομη εστι τελειη.

"The seventh day is a good day, and the seventh day is the nativity of all things. The seventh day is a principal day, and the seventh day is a perfect day."

Hesiod says,

Πρωτον ἑνη, τετρας τε, και ἑκτομη ἱερον ἡμαρ.

"The first, the fourth, and the seventh day, is sacred.

Ἑβδοματη δ' αυτις λαμπρον φαος ἡλιοιο.

"The seventh day again, the illustrious light of the sun."

Indeed Josephus, in his second book against Appion, tells us, ουδ' εστιν ου πολις Ἑλληνων, ουδε τις ουν ουδε Βαρβαρος, ουδε ἐν εθνος, ενθα μη το της ἑβδομαδος, ἡν αργουμεν ἡμεις, το εθος ου διαπεφοιτηκεν:—"There is no city of the Greeks, nor of the Barbarians, nor any nation whatever, to which our custom of resting on the seventh day has not come." Philo-Judæus, in his book *De Opificio Mundi*, no less expressly informs us, that ἑορτη γαρ ου μιας πολεως η χωρας εστιν, αλλα του παντος, ἡν κυριως αξιον και μονην πανδημον ανομαζειν και του κοσμου γενεσιον:—"It is not a festival of one city or region, but of the whole earth; which alone is worthy

to be called the festival of all people, and the birth-day of the world." And to the same purpose Theophilus Antiochenus, in his Epistle to Autolycus, book second, affirms, that, "with most people there is great ignorance, περι της ἑβδομης ημερας ἡν παντες μεν ανθρωποι ονομαζουσι, concerning the seventh day, which all men celebrate." Tibullus, the Roman poet, says, Lib. I. Eleg. 3.

> Aut ego sum causatus aves, aut omina dira
> Saturni sacra me tenuisse die.

"The reason which I assigned for my delay was, that I had no encouraging augury, or that bad omens detained me on the sacred day of Saturn." Some of the later Roman writers, it is true, speak reproachfully of the Sabbath; but then that was owing both to the ancient tradition concerning it being now greatly corrupted and almost forgotten, and to their growing hatred of the Jews, of whose religion that sacred festival formed a prominent part. See Selden, De Jur. Nat. et Gent. Lib. III. cap. 13. and 16. Riveti prælect. in cap. 20. Exod. And Owen, on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Exercitat. 36. sect. 13.

To invalidate the testimonies now adduced, for the appointment of the Sabbath at the beginning of the world, Mr Selden and others have endeavoured to prove that the seventh day, which was deemed sacred among the heathens, was the seventh day of the month, dedicated to Apollo. But the absurdity of such an allegation, however great may be the names by which it is advanced, is sufficiently obvious from the above declara-

tions of Homer, Callimachus, and Linus. For, waving altogether the quotation from Hesiod, these writers not only affirm that the seventh day was holy, but assign, as the reason of its sanctity, that on it all things were made, or perfected,—a circumstance which could not be predicated of the seventh day of the month, on which Apollo is said to have been born. Besides, although it should be admitted that it was the seventh of the month which the Greeks and the Romans looked upon as sacred, yet this will by no means account for the sentiments of other ancient nations upon the subject,—nations which had no intercourse with these people, and which were not bound by the laws which regulated their festivals. This notion, therefore, they must have received from tradition concerning the transactions at the creation of the world.

The very terms ἑπτα, ἑβδομος, and ἑβδομαϛη are plain derivatives from the Hebrew word שבע, which, in its radical meaning, signifies *sufficiency* or *fulness*. "The number *seven* was denominated from this root, because it was on that day from the creation that the Lord יכל Gen. ii. 2. *completed* or *finished* all his work, or made it sufficient for the purpose to which it was designed. The *seventh* day was also sanctified, or set apart from the beginning, as a religious Sabbath or rest, to remind believers of that rest which God then entered into, and of that שבע (Psalm xvi. 11.) *sufficiency* or *fulness* of joy which is in his presence for evermore. Hence the very early and general division of time into weeks, or periods of *seven* days. Hence the sacredness of the

seventh day, not only among believers before the giving of the law, but also among the heathen, for which they gave the very same reason as *Moses* doth, Gen. ii. 2. namely, that on it all things were *ended* or *completed*. Comp. Gen. vii. 4, 10. viii. 10, 12. xxix. 27. Exod. xvi. 22—31. Psalm xvi. 11. Heb. iv. 1—11. And hence *seven* was, both among believers and heathen, the number of *sufficiency* or *completion*." Parkhurst's Greek Lex. sub voce ἑπτα.

Note E, Page 40.

Without entering into any discussion concerning the ground of Moral Obligation, it may be safely affirmed that, in all cases, the will of God is the only proper rule and measure of our duty. As creatures of his power, and agents amenable at the bar of his justice, we are bound to do whatever he commands us, whether the substance of that command be of a temporary or permanent duration. Now, in the place to which this Note refers, our obedience is all that we mean by *morality*, taking that term in its most general and extensive import. Indeed, morality is simply that complexion of conduct which renders us the subjects of reward or of punishment. And if this be true, then surely God cannot look upon us with approbation, when we disregard any of his laws, in whatever way these may be made known to us, whether by the light of nature or the disclosures of revelation. The mode of their discovery

makes no difference in his estimation or in the real state of the matter; it is enough that his pleasure, in any given instance, be clearly and unequivocally understood. Hence, in the sense just mentioned, what we commonly call ceremonial observances, are, in fact, so long as they are binding, *moral* performances.

Note F, Page 45.

Dr Kennicott thus reasons in support of his translation:

"The words are, ויברך אלהים את יום השביעי ויקדש אתו, the English version of which is, *And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.* The verb ברך carries with it a double idea; first, of *blessing*, secondly, of *worshipping*, and that in the particular manner of bowing on the knees. These two senses may be united, when spoken of man; but the first only can be understood when confined to God. If, then, we suppose this verb to be in the conjugation Pihel, the sense will be, *God blessed the seventh day*, or *honoured it with peculiar marks of his favour.* But the word ייברך may be here better understood in Hiphil; and then, from the known power of that conjugation (which is to make, or order to do a thing), it will signify, *God ordered to bless and worship by adoration.* And as the particle את may, by the authority of Noldius, be rendered *upon*, the sense will be expressly thus, *And God ordered (man) to bless and worship on the seventh day.* The other

verb ויקדש may be also understood in Hiphil, and will then be, *and ordered to sanctify,* or *set apart for sacred uses;* and the whole will consequently run thus:—*And God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made; and God caused* (*man*) *to bless and worship on the seventh day, and ordered* (*him*) *to sanctify it.* This interpretation, as it seems conformable to grammar, and expresses the sense best (though the other amounts to the same, but with less clearness), I humbly offer to the judgment of the learned."—Kennicott's two Dissertations, p. 125, &c.

Note G, Page 79.

On this subject Mr Mede has the following remarks:

"But whether this day were in order the *seventh* from the creation or not, the Scripture is silent; for where it is called in the commandment the *seventh day,* that is in respect of the six days of labour, and not otherwise; and therefore, whensoever it is so called, those six days of labour are mentioned with it. The *seventh* day, therefore, is the seventh after the six days of labour, nor can any more be inferred from it. The example of the creation is brought for the *quotum,* one day of seven, as I have shewed, and not for the *designation* of any certain day for that seventh. Nevertheless, it might fall out so, by disposition of Divine Providence, that the Jews' designed seventh day was both the seventh in order from the creation,

and also the day of their deliverance out of Egypt. —But the Scripture no where tells us it was so (howsoever, most men take it for granted), and therefore it may as well be not so. Certain I am, the Jews kept not that day for a Sabbath till the raining of manna. For that which should have been their Sabbath the week before, had they then kept the day which afterwards they kept, was the fifteenth day of the second month; and which day, we read in the 16th of Exodus, that they marched a wearisome march, and came at night into the wilderness of Sin, where they murmured for their poor entertainment, and wished they had died in Egypt: that night the Lord sent them quails; the next morning it rained manna, which was the sixteenth day, and so six days together; the seventh, which was the twenty-second day, it rained none, and that day they were commanded to keep for their Sabbath. Now, if the twenty-second day of the month were the Sabbath, the fifteenth should have been, if that day had been kept before; but the text tells us expressly, they marched that day; and, which is strange, the day of the month is never named, unless it be once, for any station but this, where the Sabbath was ordained; otherwise it could not have been known that that day was ordained for *a day of rest*, which before was none. And why might not their *day of holy rest* be altered, as well as the beginning of the year was, for a memorial of their coming out of Egypt? I can see no reason why it might not, nor find any testimony to assure me it was not."—Mede's Works, Discourse 15.

Note H, Page 85.

That the expression εν μια των σαββατων designates the *first* day of the week, and not a certain day, as some would have it, is evident from the following considerations:—Σαββατον and its plural σαββατα are frequently employed to signify a week, as in Luke xviii. 12. and xxiv. 1.; and μια is a Hebrewism, in which the cardinal is put for the ordinal number, as in Gen. i. 5., where it is said, "the evening and the morning were יום אחד the first day." In Matt. xxviii. 1., we meet with these words, "in the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn, εις μιαν σαββατων;" and certainly, if the Jewish Sabbath was the *last* day of the week, the day which was ushered in as it expired, was the *first* day of the succeeding week. And from the account which the Evangelists give of our Lord's resurrection, nothing is plainer than that their object in using that phraseology, was to point out the day on which that glorious event took place; and we find that what Mark, who must be allowed to be the best interpreter of his own language, calls, in chap. xvi. 2. of his gospel, η μια σαββατων, he afterwards calls, in the 9th verse of that chapter, πρωτη σαββατου, the first day of the week. This fixes the meaning beyond a doubt, if indeed there could be any doubt upon the subject.

Note I, Page 96.

In the christian church, the first day of the week was now generally distinguished by the appellation, κυριακη or κυριακη ἡμερα, the Lord's day. And though Justin Martyr, in his Apology, above referred to, styles it ἡ του ἡλιου ἡμερα, *Sunday;* yet this is not to be wondered at, when it is considered that, in addressing a pagan emperor, it was necessary, in order that Antoninus might understand his meaning, to give it the name by which it was known among the heathens. Hence also we find that, for a similar reason, he deemed it requisite, in his dialogue with Trypho-Judæus, to employ, in accommodation to him, the designation ἡ μια σαββατων ἡμερα, which was in use among the Jews.

Note K, Page 167.

In Scotland, the duties of domestic religion were at one period much more attended to than at the present day; and this consideration, notwithstanding all the expressions of high-toned evangelical sentiment, and all the display of zeal in the cause of Bible and Missionary Associations, which characterise the age in which we live, furnishes a melancholy proof that vital christianity is on the decline. Formerly, heads of families, besides regularly performing their morning devotions, used, on the Sabbath evenings, to meet with their children and ser-

vants, for the purposes of catechetical instruction, of reading the holy Scriptures, and of raising their united prayers to the throne of divine grace. But such now is the neglect of that excellent and beneficial practice, and indeed of all those more private exercises of piety, which distinguish the people of God from the men of the world, that the great majority seem as indifferent about the spiritual concerns of those committed to their trust, as if they felt no interest whatever in their eternal welfare, or were not responsible for the consequences of the example which they set before them.

Sunday-evening schools, it is true, have been instituted, and are in full operation throughout the land. And though these admirable institutions are unquestionably productive of much good, yet there is a point beyond which they cannot innocently be carried. They certainly transgress their bounds, if they are at any time so managed as either, on the one hand, to weaken in the minds of parents the obligation under which they are laid, to train up their offspring in " the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;" or, on the other, to beget and foster in the young a spirit of trifling and of levity, which is too apt to be the result when many of them are assembled together in one place. To be kept within their proper sphere, they should be confined to those children only who have lost their natural instructors, or whose parents are unable or unwilling to superintend their religious and moral improvement. Even then, the number of pupils should be so limited as to render it perfectly possible for the teacher to conduct them in a manner alike suitable to the end

they have in view, and to the sanctity of the day on which they meet.

If parents did their duty, their children would derive more real advantage from remaining at home under their inspection, than from all the lessons they receive abroad in a Sunday-evening school. Where the same attention is bestowed, they would make at least an equal progress in their christian acquirements; while they are removed from those temptations to misconduct, to which they are otherwise exposed, in going and returning with their youthful companions, and while they have more forcibly and successfully impressed upon their minds a sense of the sacredness of the Sabbath, and of its devout and becoming observance. Besides, all this would tend to raise their parents more highly in their esteem, and to strengthen and perpetuate those ties of mutual affection, which the wise Author of Nature has implanted in their breasts for the best of purposes.

These considerations we would urge on the consciences of all who have the charge of offspring. No parent, one would think, could be so callous and unnatural as to feel no concern about the happiness of those so nearly allied to him. And surely, if he believes that they have an eternity to provide for, and that their state in the future world shall be determined by the complexion of their characters in the present life,—how can he, believing all this, leave them to themselves, and suffer them to be "destroyed for lack of knowledge? If their christian education be neglected,—if their tender minds be not imbued with principles

of piety enforced by example,—if they are permitted to grow up in ignorance, and to indulge in the wild and ungoverned sallies of youthful passion, the consequences to be expected are truly tremendous; they fall headlong from folly to folly, till they reach the lowest point of moral degradation. We would not indeed limit the power of divine and sovereign grace; for every thing which does not imply a contradiction is possible to the arm of Omnipotence. And though some, thus neglected and thus depraved, have been brought to the knowledge of Christ, and the obedience of his laws; yet as God usually employs means for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes, it is cruel—it is criminal in parents to withhold from their children that religious and moral instruction, which they are bound in duty and in interest to impart.

Note L, Page 233.

With a view to check the growth of puritanism, and to silence the objections of papists to the strictness of the reformed religion, James First of England published, in 1618, a declaration, to encourage sports and amusements on the Lord's day. This declaration, which was drawn up, however inconsistently it may seem, by Bishop Moreton, was to the following effect:—"That for his good people's recreation, his Majesty's pleasure was, that after the end of divine service, they should not be disturbed, letted, or discouraged from any lawful recrea-

tions; such as dancing, either of men or women, archery for men, leaping, vaulting, or any such harmless recreations; nor having of May-games, Whitsunales, or Morris-dances, or setting up of May-poles, or other sports therewith used, so as the same may be had in due and convenient time, without impediment or let of divine service; and that women should have leave to carry rushes to the church for the decorating of it, according to their old custom; withal prohibiting all unlawful games to be used on Sundays only; as bear-baiting, bull-baiting, interludes, and at all times, in the meaner sort of people prohibited, bowling."

A royal mandate was issued, commanding that this declaration should be read in all the parish churches of Lancashire, and indeed in all the parish churches of England. But as considerable opposition was made to it by the well-disposed both of the clergy and laity, obedience to it was not peremptorily insisted on. In many places, however, it was strictly and implicitly obeyed; and through this means a tide of impiety and profanation was introduced, which occasioned much uneasiness to all serious christians, and true friends to the best interests of the community. Hence some years afterwards, on a complaint being brought by the justices of the peace, before the judges in the western circuit, of the great inconvenience resulting from revels, church ales and clerk ales, on the Lord's day, these judges passed an order at the assizes for suppressing such abominations, and enjoined each parish minister to read that order in his church twice every year.

But, deeming this conduct of the judges as an invasion of the episcopal jurisdiction, the intolerant and persecuting Laud, now Archbishop of Canterbury, instigated Charles First, in 1633, to republish his father's book of sports. This was accordingly done, with the following addition:—"Out of a like pious care for the service of God, and for suppressing of those humours that oppose truth, and the ease, comfort, and recreation, of his Majesty's well-deserving people, he doth ratify his blessed father's declaration, the rather because of late, in some counties of the kingdom, his Majesty finds, that, under pretence of taking away an abuse, there hath been a general forbidding, not only of ordinary meetings, but of the feasts of the dedication of churches, commonly called wakes; it is therefore his will and pleasure, that these feasts, with others, shall be observed, and that all neighbourhood and freedom with man-like and lawful exercises be used; and the justices of the peace are commanded not to molest any in their recreations, having first done their duty to God, and continuing in obedience to his Majesty's laws."

Thus, under the patronage and sanction of royal authority, was the statute of the King eternal regarding the sanctification of the Sabbath, wantonly and openly transgressed. The court shewed how willing they themselves were to commit this heinous iniquity. They had their balls, masquerades, and plays on the Sunday evenings, while the youths of the country were engaged in their Morris-dances, May-games, church and clerk ales, and similar kinds of unhallowed revelling.

And surely, since a nation, as such, can be punished in the present world only, it cannot be too much to assume that the convulsions and distresses which rent the kingdom during the reigns of the Stuarts, were, in part at least, the merited consequences of these heaven-daring crimes.

The reader will find the facts here stated, more circumstantially narrated in Neal's History of the Puritans.

THE END.

Oliver & Boyd, Printers.

BSB Bayerische StaatsBibliothek
MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

Glen, John

A treatise on the sabbath or illustrations of the origin, obligation, change, proper observance, and spiritual advantages of that holy day

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